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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

SOCIALLY EMBEDDED INSURGENCIES

by

Alexander V. Simmons

December 2009

Thesis Advisor:

Heather S. Gregg

Second Reader:

Michael E. Freeman

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SOCIALLY EMBEDDED INSURGENCIES

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates “social embedding,” a condition where the local population and the insurgency share the same goals and methods in securing political control of their environment. Social embedding is an important phenomenon to understand because, once insurgents and the population share the same goals, separating the two becomes exponentially more difficult; in essence, the insurgents have “won” the population. The paper uses social movement theory (SMT) and its three variables (political opportunity, resource mobilization, and ideological framing) to explain the dynamic between the regime, the insurgency, and the population, and how it may lead to social embedding with the population or social rejection.

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I dedicate this thesis to my father in law, Aaron Kimbrough (Master Sergeant, United States Army, Retired), who passed away on 21 July 2009. I miss you, Pa.

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I. CONCEPT OF THE SOCIALLY EMBEDDED INSURGENCY

A. INTRODUCTION

Over the past fifty years, insurgent warfare has become one of the dominant forms of warfare for western militaries, particularly the United States. From Vietnam to Afghanistan, small local forces have engaged larger and more powerful regimes on the battlefield. Between 1968 and 2006, at least 648 terrorist and insurgent groups appeared around the world and over 38% of these groups are still active.¹ As long as insurgent groups can extract painful political concessions from stronger regimes, this form of political violence will not fade away.

This thesis centers on the conditions under which popular support is gained or lost by insurgent groups. Specifically, I look at a phenomenon that I call “social embedding,” which is when an insurgent group and a local population come to share the same objectives, methods, and resources in resisting the regime in power. What conditions convince a local population to wholly embrace an insurgent group? How does this link become so strong that a state must either cede political control or use extreme force to break the relationship? Is there a way to prevent social embedding before it is too late?

This thesis aims to answer these questions. It finds that social embedding between an insurgent group and the local population is not inevitable. There are discrete moments in time, which I call “political opportunities,” where an insurgency can exploit the regime’s weakness and gain legitimacy with the people. Likewise, there are times when the regime can take advantage of an insurgent’s missteps and seize the initiative. It is important to recognize a political opportunity because, once social embedding occurs, the price for victory goes up dramatically.

Before analyzing socially embedded insurgencies, it is essential to understand the current body of work on the causes and preventions of insurgency. Insurgency warfare is not a new phenomenon, nor is there a dearth of writing on the subject. This chapter will

¹ Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al Qa’ida* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2008), 35.

first focus on several theorists and their ideas on an insurgency's popular support and motivations. This discussion will lead to a description of social embedding and a heuristic model for analysis. Finally, a short summary will discuss the model's practical applications and limitations.

B. A REVIEW OF INSURGENCY THEORIES

One of the most influential writings in insurgency theory is Ted Robert Gurr's *Why Men Rebel*. In his seminal work, Gurr develops two theories that are useful for understanding the conditions under which insurgencies emerge. The first theory is Relative Deprivation, which posits that the people have value expectations (things to which they are rightfully entitled) and value capabilities (things that they are capable of attaining or maintaining). When the government fails to help the people in balancing their expectations and capabilities, the result is collective discontent.²

Gurr builds on collective discontent to develop the theory of frustration-anger-aggression. Gurr posits that frustration grows as collective discontent increases. Over time, this frustration may arouse anger. When an individual or group is in an angry state, it is more likely to respond violently to the source of frustration and anger.³ An insurgent movement can capitalize on the frustration-anger-aggression path by highlighting the government's failures in the face of rising popular expectations. If successful, the insurgent can focus the resulting anger and aggression into political violence against the state.⁴

Gurr further argues that the political violence that results from collective discontent has three intensity levels. Turmoil, which included riots and clashes, is relatively spontaneous and unorganized. Conspiracies, such as assassinations and coups, are more organized and extensively planned. Finally, internal wars, which are the most violent, are widespread and highly organized.⁵ The intensity of political violence is

² Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 24–25.

³ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 34.

⁴ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 182–183.

⁵ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 10–11.

often related to the regime's legitimacy, popular compliance, and the fairness of its policies.⁶ Regardless of the scale, Gurr contends that all political violence strives to replace or destroy the existing order.

Gurr's societal variables for Relative Deprivation theory are important to this study because they help define the parameters of political violence. Every culture establishes norms under which its members can act out or internalize their anger. Under the right conditions, a culture may regard violence as a justified means of expressing aggression.⁷ The power of the state, and its willingness to use violence itself, will determine the magnitude and success of political violence. Finally, the justification for violence will stem from the state's perceived legitimacy in the eyes of its people.⁸

Mohammad Hafez builds on Gurr's theory and applies it to the political environment of the Middle East. While Gurr ties political violence to the socioeconomic causes in a state, Hafez contends that the political system itself is the principle cause of violence. He argues that, "it is neither necessary for Islamists to be content in order to become moderate, nor sufficient for Islamists to be deprived to become rebellious."⁹ He divides the political process into three distinct areas. The political environment determines what methods a resistance group will use against the state, the mobilization structures within society will help the Islamists to both gather resources and fight off competition, and the ideological framing allows the group to publicize its efforts, gain popular support, and exert political pressure on the regime.

Hafez advances the study of insurgencies by applying social movement theory (SMT) as a means of explaining the conditions under which groups rebel. SMT is "an interdisciplinary approach to the study of contention that focuses on the underlying mechanisms of collective action."¹⁰ SMT gained popularity in the 1960s because it

⁶ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 186.

⁷ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 164–165.

⁸ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 186.

⁹ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 19.

¹⁰ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research," *Mediterranean Politics* 7, no. 3 (2002), 189–190.

helped to explain how protest groups, such as the civil rights movement, were able to grow in power and exert influence on the government.¹¹ The theory's strength comes from its three primary variables: mobilization structures, resource availability, and political opportunities.¹² The interaction between the three variables is useful to Hafez because it analyzes how a movement becomes rebellious, instead of just why.¹³

Hafez is one of several scholars who use social movement theory to analyze social and political unrest in Muslim countries. Snow and Marshall, who were among the first scholars to combine Islamic activism and SMT,¹⁴ illustrate how Islam was a "latent mobilization structure" that could be "tapped or activated for revolt."¹⁵ Wiktorowicz describes how Islamists use their social interactions to provide for the population, recruit followers, and propagate their ideology.¹⁶ Bayat argues that the "imagined solidarity" of a social movement is the best way to explain how Islamism makes constant political adjustments without losing popularity.¹⁷ Robinson explains how Hamas, as a social movement, rapidly grew in popularity and strength during the first *intifada* of 1987–1993.¹⁸ In each instance, the authors demonstrate how Islamic group gained both political and military power by using social movement concepts.¹⁹

¹¹ Doug McAdam, "Beyond Structural Analysis: Toward a More Dynamic Understanding of Social Movements," in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 282–283.

¹² McAdam, "Beyond Structural Analysis," 290.

¹³ Hafez, "Why Muslims Rebel," 21.

¹⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁵ David A. Snow and Susan E. Marshall, "Cultural Imperialism, Social Movements, and the Islamic Revival," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts & Change* 7 (1984): 141, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed March 11, 2009).

¹⁶ Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 97.

¹⁷ Asef Bayat, "Islamism and Social Movement Theory," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 6 (September 2005): 904, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01436590500089240> (accessed February 20, 2009).

¹⁸ Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as a Social Movement" In *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 130–134.

¹⁹ SMT and Islamism is not limited to just the Middle East. Leheny (2005) uses SMT to explain Al Qaeda's affect on Southeast Asia.

Hafez's approach helps to explain how an Islamist group can grow in power and influence. It also explains how the regime's methods of repression can fuel or smother Islamist violence. Both of these factors are incredibly important. However, there is little discussion on the population itself. His discussion leaves unanswered which conditions lead the population to accept violence as the best political solution. How does a nascent insurgency tap into this discontent and grow in power and influence?

In *Understanding Proto-Insurgencies*, Daniel Byman examines the initial conditions of a growing insurgency. Byman argues that, through the judicious use of violence, a growing insurgency can establish relative superiority over the regime and control the local population.²⁰ By becoming stronger than the state in this limited environment, the insurgency can gather resources and suppress opposition groups.

An important task for the proto-insurgent is to find a balance between violence and influence. If the insurgent is too violent, then it will alienate the population and attract the attention of the regime's security forces. If the insurgent is not violent enough, then the population will ignore it while the regime treats it as a criminal matter.²¹ Ultimately, the insurgent wants to be the sole arbiter of violence within its haven. In this circumstance, the insurgent can impose its political will on the populace, while taking control from the regime.

The importance of violence as a political tool is well known. Galula describes violence as the essential element in breaking a regime's control over the local population.²² For O'Neill, violence is the difference between an insurgency and political protest.²³ Gentry states that violence is often the result of radical social movements,

²⁰ Daniel Byman, *Understanding Proto-Insurgencies* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2007): 8, www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP178 (accessed March 10, 2009).

²¹ Byman, *Understanding Proto-Insurgencies*, 8–9.

²² David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 7.

²³ Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 33.

which may lead to revolutionary or insurgent groups.²⁴ Boyle describes violence as a form of signaling between the insurgent and the regime.²⁵ In all cases, violence is the means through which an insurgent can directly influence both the target population and the regime.

These theories are important for linking the causes of an insurgency to the behavior of political regime, the use of violence, and the attitude of the local population. None of these theories, however, address the means to which the local population shifts from passive compliance to active acceptance of the insurgent's strategies and concepts. This acceptance, which will be called social embedding, represents a crucial element of modern conflict.

C. DEFINING SOCIAL EMBEDDING

Social embedding is a condition where the local population and an insurgency share the same goals and objectives in obtaining political control of their environment. This is in sharp contrast to when the insurgent intimidates the population to follow its orders. In the case of social embedding, the population willingly follows the insurgent's directions and guidance, which may include everything from political protests to outright revolt.

When social embedding takes place, the regime is faced with three broad choices. The first choice is to forcibly break the link between the insurgent and the population. Under such circumstances, the level of violence, and its political costs, will be high because the local population is willing to fight for the insurgent movement. The second choice is to accept the insurgency's existence. This move could give the insurgency political legitimacy, which it could use to gain international approval and resources, and

²⁴ Caron Gentry, "The Relationship between New Social Movement Theory and Terrorism Studies: The Role of Leadership, Membership, Ideology and Gender," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16 (April–June 2004): 276, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all?content=10.1080/09546550490483422> (accessed February 20, 2009).

²⁵ Michael Boyle, "Bargaining, Fear, and Denial: Explaining Violence Against Civilians in Iraq 2004–2007," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 21, no. 2 (April 2009): 270, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all?content=10.1080/09546550902765565> (accessed August 20, 2009).

to continue to resist the regime. Over time, popular legitimacy could lead to the third option: the insurgency gaining a legitimate political voice in the regime's government. This could lead to an erosion of regime legitimacy and a possible insurgent takeover.

Social embedding is not a concept—it is a reality in the Middle East. The Lebanese group Hezbollah is a socially embedded insurgency. It has a sizeable military faction and implacable hostility to the United States and other Western influences. Within Lebanon, Hezbollah has strong domestic support for its social, religious, and political efforts. Military efforts to destroy the movement (most recently in 2006) have only resulted in heavy civilian casualties, a weakening of the regime's political influence, and international condemnation.²⁶ Regionally, Hezbollah enjoys widespread popularity and substantial financial support. Since 1992, Hezbollah party members have seats in the Lebanese government, thereby gaining legal political authority within the country.

At the same time, social embedding is not a common event. While Hezbollah has survived and thrived in Lebanon, armed groups such as Amal, FARL, and Ansar al-Islam, which existed in the same environment, have become largely dormant. More broadly, since the 1930s, over seventy separate insurgent groups have appeared across the Middle East.²⁷ However, only a handful ever became socially embedded. If social embedding is such a powerful method for the sustainability of an insurgent movement, then why are there not more Hezbollahs? The following will explore the conditions under which social embedding between insurgents and a population occurs.

²⁶ Tobias Buck, "How a Nation Stumbled Into War," *Financial Times* – London, July 7, 2008, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 2, 2008).

²⁷ Jane's Information Group, *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, <http://search.janes.com> (accessed February 7, 2009).

D. A MODEL OF SOCIAL EMBEDDING

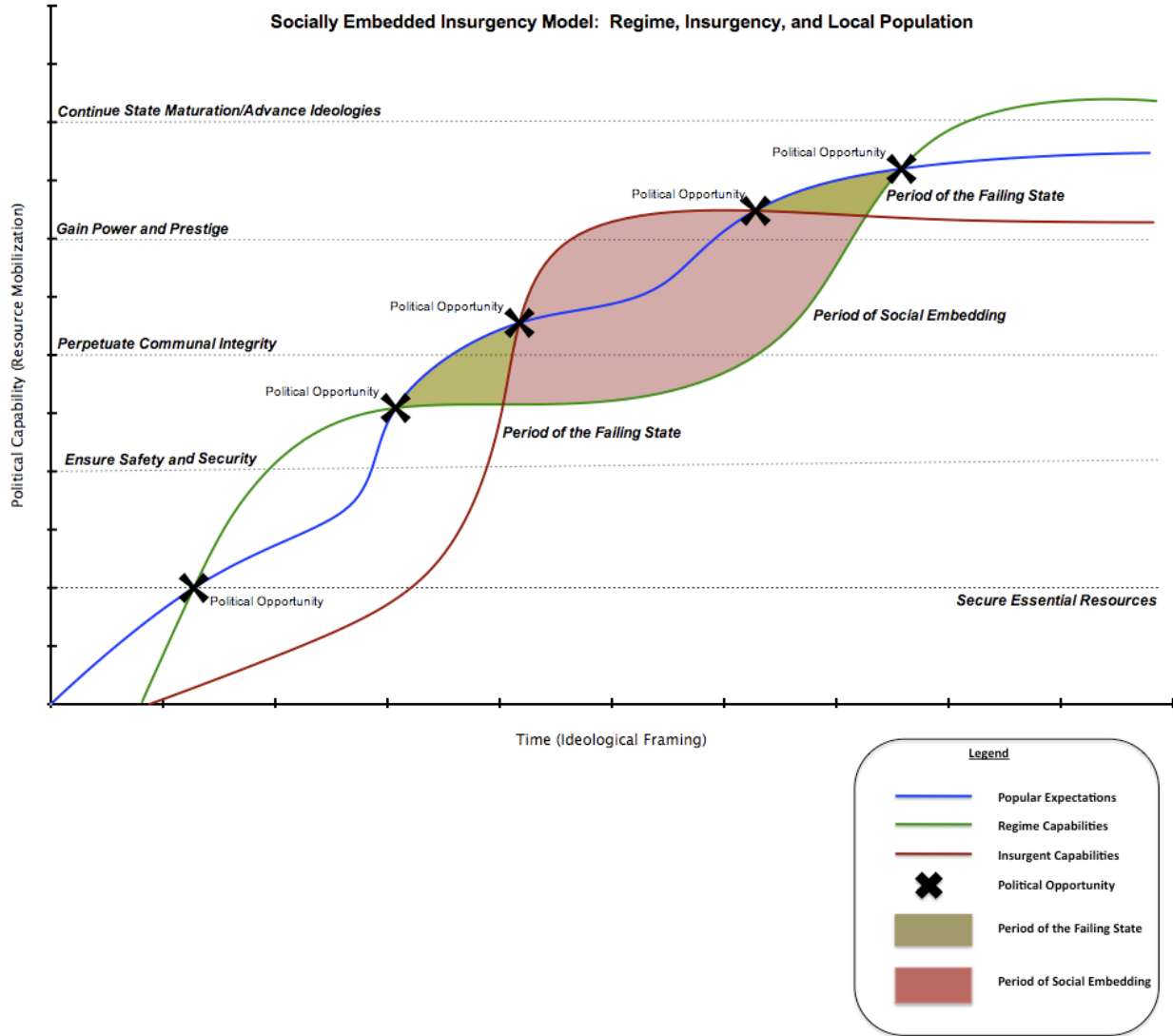


Figure 1. Ideal Social Embedding Model

This heuristic model for social embedding is based on the three tenets of social movement theory (SMT): ideological framing, resource mobilization, and political opportunity. I posit that the interplay between these three factors defines the space under which social embedding occurs.

The main players in this model are the primary political power (regime), the weaker political power (rival), and the target population (people). Ideological framing shapes activity along the x-axis of time, while resource mobilization shapes activity along the y-axis of political capacity. Political opportunities are events that change the status quo between the regime, insurgency, and the local population, which were reflected as an intersection between popular expectations and political capacity.

Ideological framing is the ability of the regime—or its rival—to influence the people to support its cause. Specifically, framing is the words, actions, and ideas that inspire the people to trust the political entity (whether regime or rival). This trust gives the political group legitimacy, which in turn provides time to fulfill its promises. A political group can also use violence as a framing tool. The use of targeted violence for intimidation is an important tool for controlling the population.²⁸

Resource mobilization is the ability to gather goods and services to fulfill political goals. These goods and services (which include money, intelligence, weapons, and personnel) translate into political capability. For social embedding to occur, the political power must be capable of fulfilling the people's expectations with its available resources. As the group fulfills expectations, then it gains more legitimacy, which allows it to increase its capability. Likewise, failure to meet expectations will reduce legitimacy, which also affects the ability to increase resources. This loss of legitimacy is particularly damaging to the state.²⁹

Political opportunity occurs when there is an intersection between popular expectations and political capability. These events, which are discrete moments in time, represent a transition point between the political entities and the people. The key characteristic is that the political opportunity is between the dominant political power and the people. If the regime can effectively target an insurgent enemy, then the insurgency's

²⁸ Byman, *Understanding Proto-Insurgencies*, 8.

²⁹ Wiktorowicz, "Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," 197.

growth is unlikely. Likewise, if a regime is too weak or distracted to effectively target the insurgent, then the enemy will grow in power and influence.³⁰ The rival power is an outsider to the interaction.

While the rival can only observe the political opportunity, it is not powerless. On the contrary, it has incredible influence on the interaction between the population and the regime. The rival can use its resources and framing to reduce the regime's capability and/or raise the people's expectations over time. The rival's goal is to create the intersection between the regime's falling or stagnant capability and the people's rising expectations. When the regime fails to meet the people's needs, it enters the zone of the failing state (see Figure 1). At this point, the rival can begin to meet the people's expectations and gain legitimacy.

When the rival power meets the people's expectations, it enters the period of social embedding (see Figure 1). Critical to this period is the shift in power: the people now consider the rival more powerful than the regime. This role reversal gives the rival political legitimacy and, more importantly, the initiative in dealing with the people. However, this power shift is relative: the regime authority may have more power across the entire state, but it is weak in the rival's enclave with the population.

When social embedding begins, time favors the rival. The longer the embedding period lasts, the more likely the people will fully embrace the rival and reject the regime's authority. With enough time, the rival can make its link to the people unbreakable. Thus, it is critical for the regime to break the period of social embedding and force the people back into a failing state period. Once that occurs, the regime can use its resources to restore its own legitimacy with the people. However, it will also have to win back the people who committed to the rival while it controlled the environment.

³⁰ Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel*, 75–76.

E. APPLYING THE HEURISTIC MODEL TO THE STUDY OF INSURGENCIES

This heuristic model for social embedding is a useful tool for understanding the success of embedded insurgencies. By identifying distinctive actors, it allows analysts to focus on the most important stages of the insurgent environment. In a multiple player environment, like Iraq and Afghanistan, such clarity will help to avoid conflating different groups and their objectives. For example, in 2005, the term “Anti-Coalition Militants” was used to simultaneously describe Al Qaeda in Iraq, Ansar al Sunnah, and 1920 Revolutionary Brigades. These three groups had fundamentally different strategies, tactics, and support bases, while coalition countermeasures for each group were different.³¹

Additionally, identifying a common set of population needs will help to objectively compare regime and insurgent effectiveness on the population. This study will use the five sets of needs that Jeffrey Kromer derived from Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs: Competition for Resources, Ensuring Safety and Security, Perpetuating Communal Integrity, Gaining Power and Prestige, and Continuing State Maturation/Advance Ideologies.³² This list is not the definitive means for comparing population objectives, but it defines a common set of objectives, and Maslow’s Hierarchy is both simple enough to remember and powerful enough to support detailed analysis.

Finally, the model focuses analysis to a specific period of time. Similar to lumping different insurgencies into one indiscriminate mass, attempting to explain a group over its entire lifespan weakens analysis. I posit that every insurgency faces a critical point in its development when it either seized the initiative or failed to adapt. This period of action defines a socially embedded insurgency.

The remainder of the thesis consists of case studies that examine insurgent groups through the lens of social embedding. Chapter II discusses Lebanon’s Hezbollah, a

³¹ Jane’s Information Group, “Gulf State Terror Groups,” *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism*, <http://search.janes.com> (accessed March 5, 2009).

³² Jeffrey B. Kromer, *Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations: A New Paradigm, Analysis Tool, and US Air Force Role* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, [March 30, 2007]): 7, <http://www.dtic.mil> (accessed September 11, 2009).

highly embedded insurgency, and its development between 1982 and 1992. Chapter III discusses Al Qaeda in Iraq, a socially rejected insurgency, and its rise and fall between 2002 and 2008. Chapter IV will discuss policy and strategy considerations in preventing the rise of socially embedded insurgencies, as well as options to deal with those already in existence.

II. HEZBOLLAH AS A SOCIALLY EMBEDDED INSURGENCY

A. INTRODUCTION

The Lebanese Group Hezbollah (Party of God) is one of the most feared and respected terrorist organizations in the Middle East. Before Al Qaeda's attack on September 11th, 2001, Hezbollah was responsible for more American deaths than any other organization.³³ Even prior to the 2006 War, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) considers Hezbollah's armed wing, the Islamic Resistance (IR) the most formidable military unit it has ever faced.³⁴ Finally, in addition to its military strength, Hezbollah wields significant political power through its 14 parliamentary seats and an enviable social services sector.³⁵

However, Hezbollah was not born as a socially embedded insurgency. In 1982, AMAL, founded by the revered Shiite leader Musa al Sadr, was the dominant Shia political group in Lebanon. Hezbollah, on the other hand, was an unknown group of disgruntled AMAL radicals. By 1992, Hezbollah would be the dominant Shia political and military organization, while AMAL would be on the decline. How did Hezbollah transform from a minor presence to a socially embedded insurgency in only ten years?

This chapter argues that Hezbollah's popular success came from a variety of political, social, and military decisions in the aftermath of the 1982 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. Adopting the role of Shia protector, Hezbollah was able to provide for its people in a way that neither AMAL nor the government could match. In addition, Hezbollah was able to adjust its ideology to take advantage of critical political opportunities after the 1989 Taif Accords. When the 1992 parliamentary elections

³³ Jane's Information Group, "Hizbullah," Jane's *World Insurgency and Terrorism*, <http://search.janes.com> (accessed August 5, 2008). Prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, the 1983 Beirut bombing, with 241 fatalities, was the deadliest terrorist attack in American history.

³⁴ Jane's Information Group, "Hizbullah."

³⁵ Simon Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (2006): 24, <http://www.informaworld.com/10.1080/09592310500221286> (accessed December 4, 2008).

arrived, Hezbollah would be in position to emerge as the dominant representative of Lebanon's Shia—and virtually impossible to remove from the environment.

B. IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

In order to understand Hezbollah's rise, it is essential to understand Lebanese society prior to the 1975–1989 civil war. In those times, as now, Lebanon divided political power among the three largest confessional groups (in order of size): Christian Maronites, Sunnis and Shia. Historically, the government tended to neglect the Shia, which were concentrated in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, and far from the capital city of Beirut. However, between 1948 and 1975, the Shia population exploded from an estimated 225,000 to nearly 750,000. This represented a demographic shift from 17% to nearly 30% of the country's population in less than 30 years.³⁶ This explosive growth overwhelmed the labor and services in southern Lebanon, so thousands of Shia moved to the cities, especially to the crowded slums of Beirut.

³⁶ Salim Nasr and Diane James, "Roots of the Shi'i Movement," *MERIP Reports*, no. 133 (June 1985): 12, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3010812> (accessed November 10, 2008). The last official census in Lebanon took place in 1932, thus the Shia numbers are only an estimate.



Figure 2. Lebanon's distribution of communities (estimated) in 1983.³⁷

When the Shia only lived in their own enclaves, there was little to no interaction with the Sunni or Christian population. With their arrival in the capital region, there were increased contacts between the different confessional groups, where the Shia recognized their political and economic disadvantages.³⁸ With a growing professional class, a migrant middle class, and an industrial working class, Shia began to question the political status quo.³⁹ Unfortunately, the Shia were still a rural population with a politically naïve leadership. It would take a strong leader to confront the confessional system and bring the Shia to political parity with the other population groups.

³⁷ Aaron Sofer, "Lebanon: Where Demography is the Core of Politics and Life," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 2 (April 1986): 203, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283112> (accessed November 23, 2009).

³⁸ Haddad, *The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah*, 25.

³⁹ Nasr and James, *Roots of the Shi'i Movement*, 12.

Political isolation ended with the arrival of an Iranian-born cleric named Musa al-Sadr. Sadr moved to Tyre in 1959 and assumed the post of Shia mufti after the death of Sayyid Sharif al-Din.⁴⁰ A mujtahid (a Shia religious scholar), Sadr received his religious education in the Shiite holy cities of Qom and Najaf, and understood the Shia narrative of suffering, oppression, and deprivation.⁴¹ Over time, Sadr redirected the Shia worldview from victimhood towards a new purpose: political activism in order to save themselves from the government's incompetence and complacency.⁴² Through his speeches and personal example, Sadr established the framework for Shiite activism, resulting in the creation of Harakar al-Mahrumin, or Movement of the Dispossessed.⁴³

The Movement's political program had five major demands of the government. First, Lebanon needed gradual reform of the confessional system in order to properly represent Shiite interests. Second, a chamber of religious leaders was necessary to work alongside the parliament to ensure a balance between the sects. Third, the electoral laws needed amending in order to properly represent the changing demographics in the country. Fourth, the country's political climate needed a cleansing of corruption and immorality. Finally, Shia- dominated southern Lebanon needed economic development to bring it up to par with the rest of the country.⁴⁴ Sadr believed that, if the country would implement these reforms, then the Shia would have a fair place in the country's politician and economic future.

While Sadr did not promote political violence, he did believe in the concept of self-defense, saying, "If the government fails to perform its duty, it is still the people's duty to defend themselves."⁴⁵ Thus, Sadr formed the Movement's military wing,

⁴⁰ Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, "Factors Conducive to the Politicization of the Lebanese Shi'a and the Emergence of Hizbu'llah," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 309.

⁴¹ Bryan Early, "Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State," *World Affairs* 168, no. 3 (2006), 118.

⁴² Nasr and James, *Roots of the Shi'i Movement*, 12.

⁴³ Judith P. Harik, "Between Islam and the System: Sources and Implications of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hizballah," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40, no. 1 (March 1996): 44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/174447>.

⁴⁴ Nasr and James, *Roots of the Shi'i Movement*, 12.

⁴⁵ Nasr and James, *Roots of the Shi'i Movement*, 15.

AMAL, in 1974.⁴⁶ AMAL would serve as the armed defender for the Shia when the Lebanese civil war broke out in 1975. During the early phases (1975–1979), AMAL focused on protecting the Shia south from Israeli-backed Christian militias and other armed threats.⁴⁷ AMAL also gained support from the growing Shia middle class of business people and professionals.⁴⁸ Heavy Shia casualties at the hands of the Maronite militias consolidated AMAL's support, as well as hardening Shia enmity against the Maronites' Israeli supporters.⁴⁹

In less than six years, Sadr's Movement had earned over 80% support among the Shia, effectively displacing all other political groups for primacy.⁵⁰ In May 1975, Sadr's Movement consolidated control of the Shia political establishment by forcing out Lebanon's speaker of parliament Kamal As'ad. This was a significant act because As'ad represented the traditional, passive, and politically isolated Shia leadership.⁵¹ The Movement of the Dispossessed, under Sadr's vision, was the new, unified, and ascendant voice of the Shia within Lebanon.

However, Musa al-Sadr and AMAL would not capitalize on this newfound unity. Sadr disappeared during a trip to Libya in 1978, and his remains were never found. His loss would send AMAL into an ideological crisis. AMAL would abandon its Islamic activism, while "proposing a democratic pluralism based on intersectarian consensus."⁵² The Iranian Revolution of 1979 would re-ignite the Shia population, while setting the stage for the creation of a new organization to replace AMAL.

⁴⁶ Saad-Ghorayeb, "Factors Conducive to the Politicization of the Lebanese Shi'a and the Emergence of Hizbu'llah," 310.

⁴⁷ Harik, *Between Islam and the System*, 44.

⁴⁸ Simon Haddad, "A Survey of Lebanese Shi'i Attitudes Towards Hezbollah," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 16, no. 3 (2005): 317, <http://www.informaworld.com/10.1080/09592310500221286> (accessed December 05, 2008).

⁴⁹ Haddad, *The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah*, 23.

⁵⁰ Nasr and James, *Roots of the Shi'i Movement*, 14.

⁵¹ Nasr and James, *Roots of the Shi'i Movement*, 14.

⁵² Haddad, *The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah*, 23.

C. 1982: THE ISRAELI INVASION AND OCCUPATION

In 1979, less than a year after Musa al-Sadr's disappearance, another Shia religious leader dominated the world stage. Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, at the forefront of a popular revolution in Iran, overthrew the US-backed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. This was not only the first Islamic revolution in modern times; it was the first successful Shia-backed resistance movement since the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty in the 8th Century CE.⁵³ The subsequent hostage crisis at the American Embassy in Tehran led to a freezing of relations between the US and Iran.⁵⁴

After Khomeini's victory in Tehran, he turned his attention to Beirut. Khomeini was familiar with the Shia situation in Lebanon, and knew their spiritual leader, Musa al Sadr. In the 1930s, he studied in Najaf with Sadr, along with a number of Lebanese and Iranian clerics.⁵⁵ During Khomeini's exile in Iraq and France, he monitored the events in Lebanon with great interest. For example, in February 1978, Khomeini criticized US and Israeli policies towards Lebanon, stating that they had reduced Lebanon to "its present miserable state."⁵⁶ When the Grand Ayatollah took power in 1979, he inserted the concept of "regime support to the Lebanese Shia" into the new Iranian constitution.⁵⁷

On the other hand, the Iranian Revolution created a crisis within AMAL. After Sadr's disappearance, Nabi Berri, a well-to-do lawyer, became the new leader. Berri was neither a pious pragmatist (like Sadr) nor a devout firebrand (like Khomeini). Under his leadership, AMAL would embrace "many ideological currents and disagreements" while

⁵³ Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr., *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 7th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002), 72–73.

⁵⁴ Gawdat Bahgat, "Iran and Terrorism: The Transatlantic Responses," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 22, no. 2 (April–June 1999): 142, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed December 3, 2008).

⁵⁵ Abbas William Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship," *The Middle East Journal* 62, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 345, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed December 4, 2008).

⁵⁶ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 34.

⁵⁷ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 34.

failing to adhere to Sadr's religious foundation.⁵⁸ This constant shifting of ideas and concepts was unsettling to some of AMAL's more pious supporters.

Fortunately for these dissenters, a new religious leader emerged in the form of Sayyid Muhammad Fadlallah. A contemporary with Sadr, he assumed a role of spiritual guide for many Shia, but never joined AMAL or any other organization.⁵⁹ While he promoted religious coexistence (like Sadr), he also promoted the armed struggle against Islam's enemies, like Israel.⁶⁰ Fadlallah's messages helped to strengthen the spiritual group and convinced them to try a new path.

The new path would appear in the aftermath of the 1982 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. Known as Operation Peace for Galilee, Israeli forces invaded Lebanon with the goal of denying the PLO sanctuary in Lebanon. In less than three months, the IDF successfully drove over 14,000 Palestinian fighters and Syrian soldiers out of southern Lebanon. In addition, Bahir Gemayel, a Maronite ally of Israel, became the new Lebanese president. Finally, the Israelis occupied the Litani River valley and controlled all of southern Lebanon.⁶¹

The Israeli invasion radicalized many AMAL supporters, while the Shia population soured on the occupation forces. In less than a year, over 10,000 Lebanese and Palestinian men were in Israeli-controlled jails.⁶² Additionally, over 80 percent of the villages in southern Lebanon suffered combat damage, with seven others nearly destroyed.⁶³ However, Berri and the Lebanese government did not confront the Israelis. On the contrary, Berri collaborated with President Gemayel on the National Salvation

⁵⁸ Augustus R. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 29.

⁵⁹ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 316.

⁶⁰ Judith P. Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 61.

⁶¹ Hala Jaber, "Consequences of Imperialism: Hezbollah and the West," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 6, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1999, 1999): 169–170, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed December 9, 2008).

⁶² Saad-Ghorayeb, "Politicization of the Lebanese Shi'a," 315.

⁶³ Saad-Ghorayeb, "Politicization of the Lebanese Shi'a," 314.

Council, which supported the pro-Israeli Maronite militia.⁶⁴ AMAL, the armed group who was supposed to protect the Shia, was unwilling to confront the Israelis. The AMAL defectors were ready to fight.

Although Iran was engaged in a bloody war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Khomeini jumped at the opportunity to spread the Islamic Revolution to Lebanon. Stating that it would be more efficient to "prepare and equip them [the Lebanese] to defend their own country against Israel"⁶⁵ than to send Iranian units, Khomeini sent 1500 Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guard) to the Bekaa Valley in southern Lebanon.⁶⁶ Throughout the war, the Pasdaran would provide training and intelligence targeting to Hezbollah operatives.⁶⁷

In addition to Iranian assistance, Syria also supported the resistance effort. As a matter of realpolitik, Syria supported any Lebanese militias that fought the Israelis. Therefore, Damascus allowed Iran to build a base in the Syrian town of Zabadani, which facilitated Pasdaran movement to the Bekaa Valley.⁶⁸ The provision of a safe haven was essential to Hezbollah's birth and early development.

Thus, a disparate of "alienated AMAL members, Islamic Amal, individual clerics and their followings, the Lebanese Da'wa, the Association of Muslim ulema in Lebanon, and the Association of Muslim Students,"⁶⁹ combined with a cohort of Iranian Revolutionary Guards to form Hezbollah sometime in 1982. Most of its future leaders,

⁶⁴ Saad-Ghorayeb, "Politicization of the Lebanese Shi'a," 318.

⁶⁵ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 35.

⁶⁶ Saad-Ghorayeb, "Politicization of the Lebanese Shi'a," 317.

⁶⁷ Magnus Ranstorp, "Hizbollah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 6, no. 3 (Autumn 1994, 1994): 310, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed December 4, 2008).

⁶⁸ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 38.

⁶⁹ Saad-Ghorayeb, "Politicization of the Lebanese Shi'a," 319.

such as Hassan Nasrallah, Abbas al-Musawi, Raghieb Harb, and Subhi al-Tufayli, were only in their 20s and 30s.⁷⁰ Hizbollah's founding was secret, and it would not announce itself officially until 1984.⁷¹

From the beginning, the Party of God had higher and more significant objectives than the other militias fighting Israeli occupation. Hezbollah's founding principle was its commitment to Islam and the Guardianship of the Supreme Jurisconsult (Vilayat-I Faqih).⁷² Unlike other groups that held secular or temporal goals, Hezbollah was born with a commitment to Iran's revolution. In essence, Hezbollah was dedicated to bringing the rule of God to the Muslim world.

However, contrary to popular perceptions, this commitment was not universal. In Hezbollah's founding document, the so-called Manifesto of the Nine, the party limited itself to operating "within a Lebanese context and in accord with Lebanese realities."⁷³ Despite the allegiance to Khomeini, nationalist goals had priority over pan-Islamic issues.⁷⁴

By 1984, the singular nationalist goal for Hezbollah was to drive Israel and its supporters out of Lebanon. At that point, Israeli forces had killed over 19,000 Lebanese and wounded an additional 32,000.⁷⁵ The invaders killed thousands of Shia, while displacing thousands more from the region. These refugees often ended up in Palestinian camps or in Beirut's slums.⁷⁶ To Hezbollah, armed violence was the only way to respond to Israeli aggression.

⁷⁰ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 34.

⁷¹ A. Nizar Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (June 1993): 322, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed December 3, 2008).

⁷² Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 36.

⁷³ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 36.

⁷⁴ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 36.

⁷⁵ Saad-Ghorayeb, "Politicization of the Lebanese Shi'a," 314.

⁷⁶ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 34.

To carry out military operations, Hezbollah created the Islamic Resistance (IR) and the Islamic Jihad (IJ). Both organizations were not standing armies, but trained combatants that would fight when Hezbollah requested their help.⁷⁷ Islamic Jihad carried out traditional conventional attacks against the Israelis, and was therefore not much different than any other militia. Islamic Jihad was also responsible for the kidnapping spree in Beirut and the hijacking of TWA flight 847.⁷⁸

On the other hand, Islamic Resistance introduced an entirely new phenomenon: a martyrdom, or suicide bombing, corps. From their first attack on November 11, 1982 (Ahmad Kassir's attack of an Israeli outpost in Tyre) to their 1983 attacks on the American and French barracks in Beirut; suicide bombing was a powerful and effective weapon.⁷⁹ As a sign of effectiveness, international peacekeepers left Beirut shortly after the barracks bombings, which killed over 300 American and French service members.⁸⁰

In spite of its extreme violence, Hezbollah had a clear rationale behind their methods. As stated before, two of Hezbollah's major goals were to drive out the Israeli occupiers and establish an Islamic state. In the chaos of the civil war, bombings and kidnappings were effective tools to accomplish these feats. However, unlike other militant Islamist groups that tend to ignore the civilian / military divide, Hezbollah "principally targeted combatants in its military operations."⁸¹ Additionally, and most interesting, there are no proven Hezbollah suicide attacks after the Western armies left 1985 until the war ended in 1990.⁸²

This pragmatism came from the group's Operational Code. In essence, the Code helped Hezbollah operatives to plan, respond, and rationalize violent acts based on Shiite

⁷⁷ Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbullah," 328.

⁷⁸ Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders, "Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, 'Terrorism' and the Politics of Perception," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (February 2005): 175, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed December 3, 2008).

⁷⁹ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 36.

⁸⁰ Jaber, "Consequences of Imperialism: Hezbollah and the West," 163.

⁸¹ Early, "Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State," 115–117.

⁸² Harb and Leenders, "Know Thy Enemy," 178.

beliefs. The code prioritized kidnapping victims, methods of torture, and a code of conduct in treating prisoners. Here are a few examples:

- 30 of 38 possible prisoner categories were off limits for torture, execution, or pursuit upon escape.
- 34 of 38 categories were off limits for unwarranted assassination.
- Shooting an escaping prisoner in the back was considered dishonorable
- Providing medical assistance to prisoners was acceptable
- Military intelligence officers, diplomats, American citizens, and Israeli citizens were preferred hostages.⁸³

Beyond the overt use of violence, Hezbollah recognized the fact that the Shia were suffering tremendously during the Israeli occupation and civil war. Thus, they provided what the Lebanese government could not: social services. Providing assistance in lieu of the government was not unusual in Lebanon. The civil war has destroyed any semblance of order, and each sectarian group wanted to expand its power within its confessional group. Thus, any type of aid and development that a group gave to the people was useful.

The Hezbollah difference, though, was the unmatched scale and organization that it brought to the effort. Between 1982 and 1986, Hezbollah set up Jihad al-Binaa (Holy Reconstruction Organ) with approximately \$90 million of Iranian funds. It provided a wide variety of services, from medical care and financial aid to housing and public utilities.⁸⁴ In the process, Hezbollah “provided a higher quality of services to some communities in the midst of a civil war than the same communities received during [peacetime] from the Lebanese state.”⁸⁵

Throughout the conflict, Iran would contribute mightily to Hezbollah’s social coffers, to the tune of \$60 million a year. With these funds, Hezbollah built two major

⁸³ Ayla Schbley, “Religious Terrorists: What They Aren’t Going to Tell Us.” *Terrorism* 13, no. 3 (1990), 238–239.

⁸⁴ Harb and Leenders, “Know Thy Enemy,” 327.

⁸⁵ Early, “Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State,” 120.

hospitals in southern Lebanon in 1986, which supported an array of pharmacies and medical centers in the region.⁸⁶ Hezbollah also repaired over 1000 homes damaged by Israeli and other attacks.⁸⁷

The combination of violence, social services, and clear ideology served Hezbollah well throughout the war. In the face of an impotent government, Hezbollah not only protected its charges, it provided a higher level of service and support in the midst of a civil war than the government ever did.⁸⁸ However, there were still some radical elements within the party. It would take the death of a leader—and the end of a war—to deal with that issue.

D. 1989: THE VISIBLE SHIFT TOWARDS PRAGMATISM

In 1989, two important events would have a significant impact on Hezbollah's ideology and direction. The first event took place in June, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini died in Tehran. He was a vocal and powerful ally to Hezbollah, and his support inspired the radical wing of the organization. Khomeini's successor, Hashemi Rafsanjani, became President after winning 85% of the popular vote. He immediately refocused Iran from spreading the revolution to rebuilding its economy in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War.⁸⁹ In all likelihood, it appeared that Iran would take a far less ideological stance towards Hezbollah.⁹⁰

Second, the Lebanese Civil War ended with the ratification of the Taif Accord in October 1989. This Syrian-backed agreement reestablished a Lebanese government based on the confessional system from the 1943 National Pact.⁹¹ Additionally, Syria

⁸⁶ Ranstorp, "Hizbollah's Command Leadership," 320.

⁸⁷ Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbullah," 328.

⁸⁸ Early, "Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State," 120.

⁸⁹ Shireen T. Hunter, "Post-Khomeini Iran," *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 5 (Winter 1989/1990): 138, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed December 10, 2008).

⁹⁰ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 41.

⁹¹ Early, "Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State," 120.

would assume a protective role over the broken Lebanese state. This implied the disarming of all militias, to include Hezbollah.⁹² To enforce the new mandate, Damascus kept nearly 35,000 troops in Beirut.⁹³

Hezbollah's military prowess, religious dedication, and services capability had displaced AMAL from its role as Shia guardian. However, in compliance with the Taif Accord, the group's armed wings had to disarm. This call to disarm flew in the face of several unpleasant facts. Thousands of armed Israeli troops remained in the Litani River valley, using it as a buffer zone between Lebanon and Israel. The other Lebanese militia groups, which would not demobilize without Hezbollah, could restart the conflict and plunge the nation back into war. Finally, the Syrian Army was powerful enough to disarm Hezbollah by force, while simultaneously punishing the Shia community in the process.

Hezbollah now faced a crossroad: either maintain the ideological banner of Khomeini or accept a more pragmatic route to protect the Shia. The answer would come in an extraordinary meeting in Tehran in November 1989. The radicals, led by Sheik Tufayl, advocated a "perpetual jihad" against the opponents of an Islamist Lebanon.⁹⁴ The moderates advocated integration in the confessional system.⁹⁵ Rafsanjani, the Iranian president, sided with the pragmatists and Hezbollah decided to accept the Taif Accords. The group's new goal: to become a viable political party in time for the 1992 parliamentary elections.

This choice came with an emotional price. Hezbollah was founded with the goal of creating an Islamic Republic of Lebanon. By abandoning this goal, the members were admitting that this was no longer feasible.⁹⁶ However, this was a realistic assessment. The group's leaders realized that a true Islamic state had to come by the will of the

⁹² Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 45.

⁹³ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 40.

⁹⁴ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 42.

⁹⁵ Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands," 41.

⁹⁶ Early, "Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State," 121.

people. Any effort to impose such a result would only reignite the civil war.⁹⁷ The best way to influence the will of people would not come from violence, but from controlling the levers of government.⁹⁸

On the topic of the elections, Hezbollah faced a significant problem: how would it convince the Lebanese people, particularly non-Shia, that it would be an honest player in politics? Here, Hezbollah would use their strong existing social network to gain support. Using its hospitals and schools as examples, Hezbollah displayed itself as “the part of general political and social resurrection.”⁹⁹ This network of social services had an impact far beyond the Shia communities. Other groups noticed how Hezbollah provided valuable services and food aid during the post-war period—services that the central government and other groups did not.¹⁰⁰ “If Hezbollah can provide such good governance now,” the thought probably went, “then how would they do if they were part of the government?”

Secondly, Hezbollah created a massive voter database and built extensive candidate lists. With this knowledge, it ran different candidate lists, both party and independent, in order to maximize the candidate’s impact and potential to win.¹⁰¹ Finally, Hezbollah decided to nominate a fixed number of candidates and leave vacant places for non-party members. This would allow the Party to negotiate and compromise with the political powers in each district to fill these seats.¹⁰² By leaving seats open in Hezbollah-strong districts, the party could strengthen its hand while simultaneously weakening AMAL, the other Shia party participating in the elections.

On Election Day 1992, Hezbollah won a 14-seat coalition in the 148-seat Lebanese parliament, making it the first Islamist party outside of Iran to win a nation-

⁹⁷ Early, “Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State,” 121.

⁹⁸ Early, “Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State,” 121.

⁹⁹ Early, “Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State,” 121.

¹⁰⁰ Hamzeh, “Lebanon’s Hizbullah,” 332.

¹⁰¹ Hamzeh, “Lebanon’s Hizbullah,” 330

¹⁰² Hamzeh, “Lebanon’s Hizbullah,” 330.

wide election.¹⁰³ Hezbollah now had legitimate political power, both in the parliament and in the cabinet, to back up the social and military strength it had gained over the 1980s. The Party of God had arrived.

E. ANALYSIS

How does Hezbollah's growth fit into the social embedding model?

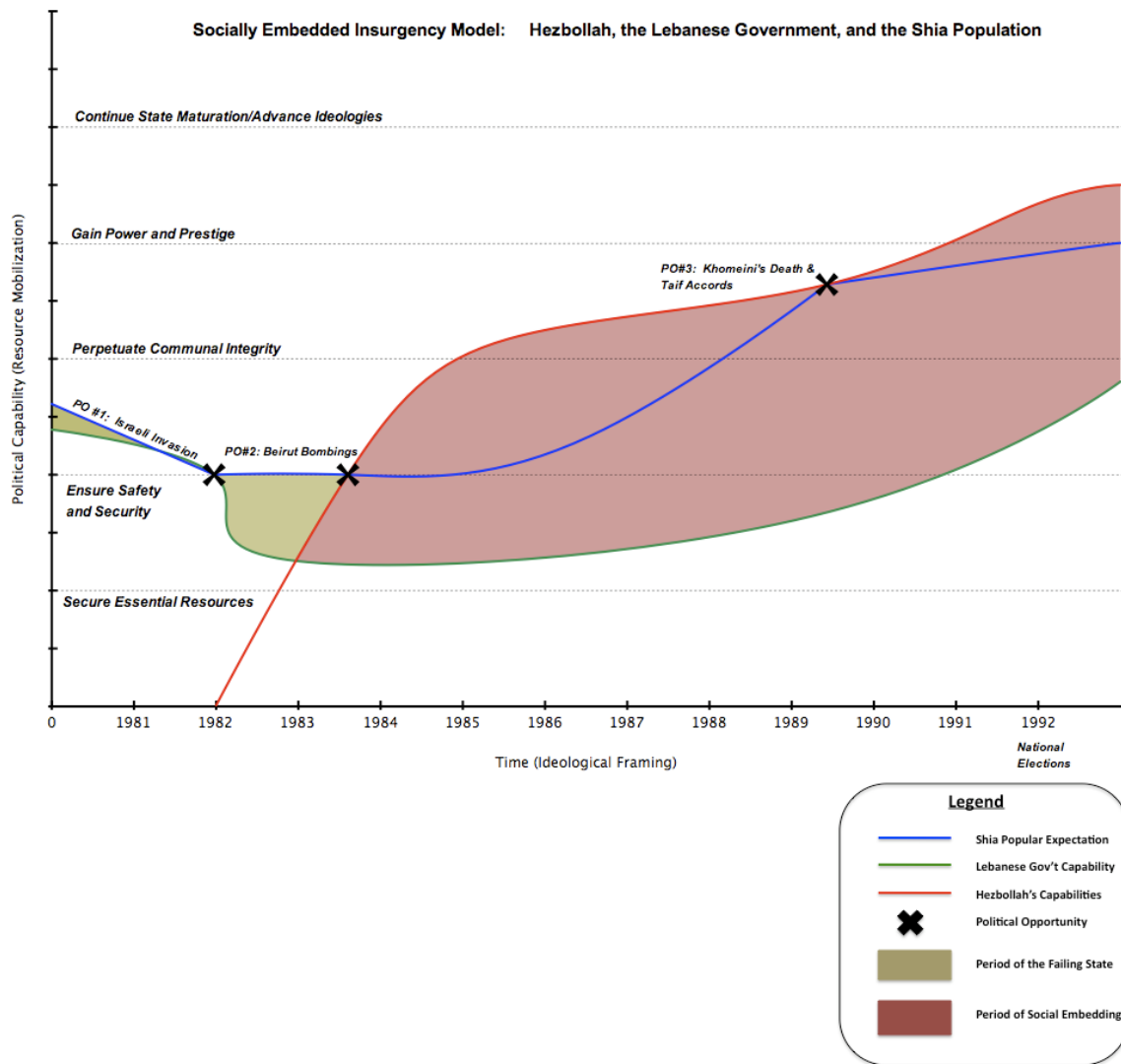


Figure 3. Hezbollah in the SEI Model

¹⁰³ Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah," 24.

Hezbollah's path to social embedding began long before 1982. The foundations were set under the confessional system of pre-war Lebanon. The 1943 National Accord created a division of political power among Maronites, Sunnis, and Shia, based on numbers from the 1932 census. The Shia, who were located in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, were the smallest group in the census, and received the smallest share of power. Additionally, their population bases were in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, locations far from the centers of power in Beirut.

This lack of political power showed up in many ways. While Lebanon's economy thrived before 1975, the Shias saw little of it. There was virtually no development in the Shia dominated area, and the job market was primarily agrarian and rural. Maronite commanders dominated the military, while the Shia served as ground troops. Finally, the population explosion did nothing to improve the Shia's role in government. For the Shia, Lebanon was a failing state, represented in the gold-shaded section on the graph.

In this environment, it is easy to understand how Musa al-Sadr gained power and prestige among the population. He was able to unify the Shia into a collective voice, giving them the opportunity to influence political affairs in Lebanon. His *Movement of the Dispossessed* provided a rallying cry for rights and dignity for the population. AMAL would provide the armed might to protect the people. Sadr would provide the vision and leadership. This combination would increase the Shia's expectations from the government, but the government would never meet those needs.

When the Lebanese civil war began, the popular expectations shifted to ensuring security and safety. The government in Beirut, over time, lost more and more capacity to provide this basic need for the Shia. The situation worsened when Sadr disappeared in 1978. As Nabi Berri tried to lead AMAL in a sectarian direction, the group slowly lost respect and prestige amongst the Shia.

The first political opportunity appeared in 1982, when Israel began Operation Peace for Galilee. The Shia, who already had little trust in their government, expected Beirut to demand an Israeli withdrawal or, at the very least, send troops to protect the Shia villages in southern Lebanon. When the government appeared to collaborate with

the Israelis and the Maronite militias, the Shias clearly broke from the government. This break is illustrated in Political Opportunity (PO) #1 in Figure 2.

The Ayatollah Khomeini was able to exploit this rift between the Shia and the government. He provided trainers and funding for the disgruntled AMAL members who would form the core of Hezbollah. Syria contributed by allowing the young militia to safely train on its soil. During those first two years, Hezbollah was able to build political capacity through military training and a singular focus: to drive the Israelis out of Lebanon.

When Hezbollah burst on the scene in late 1983 with a series of attacks on Israeli and Western forces, they demonstrated the ability to fight for the Shia. This dramatic arrival convinced many Shia that Hezbollah would protect them, while AMAL and the government would not. Hezbollah's actions represent PO #2 in Figure 2.

Hezbollah, with Iranian support, was able to back up its actions with support. Through the Martyr's Foundation, Hezbollah paid over \$90 million to the families of IR/IJ fighters between 1982 and 1986.¹⁰⁴ *Jihad al Binaa*, the reconstruction agency, built two major hospitals, schools, mosques, and an array of other projects in Shia areas.¹⁰⁵ These efforts successfully consolidated support among the Shia population, represented by the period of social embedding (shaded red) on the graph.

1989 was a pivotal year for Hezbollah. The combination of the Taif Accords and Khomeini's death threatened to cut off both the military and reconstruction arms of Hezbollah. This was a political opportunity for Hezbollah because the people's expectations had risen to the level of the Party's capacity—after years of having safety, security, and communal integrity, the Shia now expected to have a stronger voice in the government. Hezbollah now had a choice: if it refused to disarm, then the Party would risk losing popular support if it reignited the war. However, if the Party disarmed while the Israelis were still in the south, then it could no longer protect the Shia, and would suffer a massive loss of legitimacy. This critical point is PO #3 on Figure 2.

¹⁰⁴ Ranstorp, "Hizbollah's Command Leadership," 320.

¹⁰⁵ Ranstorp, "Hizbollah's Command Leadership," 320.

What saved Hezbollah from ideological crisis—the same crisis that doomed AMAL—was the 1989 Tehran Conclave with President Rafsanjani. When he and the Hezbollah moderates chose to stand in the 1992 Parliamentary elections, the path became clear. Hezbollah could use its massive community network to win legitimate political power in the central government. This act would give Hezbollah the ability to influence Lebanese politics from within the government, while simultaneously giving the Shia an unprecedented level of power and prestige.

Israel played an unwitting role in Hezbollah's success. If the IDF had left southern Lebanon after the Taif Accord, then Hezbollah would have lost its reason to keep its weapons. If the Islamic Resistance were unarmed, then the Shia would have had to depend on the government for safety and security. This would have diluted Hezbollah's power, and may have given the Lebanese government a chance to reengage the Shia and fight for legitimacy.

That scenario never came to pass. When the IDF continued their occupation of southern Lebanon, Hezbollah continued its armed resistance in the south in order to protect the Shia. This move confirmed, once again, that the central government was incapable or unwilling to protect the Shia. Hezbollah, on the other hand, was both willing and able, thus further consolidating Hezbollah's political power, while seriously damaging the government's legitimacy with the Shia.

By the time the 1992 elections arrived, Hezbollah was ready. The government in Beirut had worked hard to gain popular support and stage internationally accepted elections. Every faction was committed to rebuilding Lebanon and forming a viable political entity. On the model, the government was working to build communal integrity and attempting to increase power and prestige in the eyes of its people.

None of Beirut's efforts, though, mattered to the Shia. Over the previous decade, the Shia saw that Beirut did not care for their needs or expectations. Hezbollah had shed blood to protect Shia families. Hezbollah had spent millions to rebuild homes, schools, hospitals, and roads. Hezbollah had chosen to participate in the elections in order to give the Shia a tangible level of power and prestige within the central government.

Hezbollah's actions over the decade had embedded the group deeply into Shia society, and both parts depended on each other for survival, support and success. Thus, only Hezbollah would win the majority of the Shia vote in 1992, thus becoming an intractable part of Lebanon's body politic.

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III. AL QAEDA IN IRAQ'S FAILURE TO SOCIALLY EMBED

A. INTRODUCTION

Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was born in October 2004, when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of *Tawhid wah Jihad*, swore allegiance to Osama bin Laden and his global jihadist movement.¹⁰⁶ A salafi organization with a large number of foreign fighters, AQI became one of the most lethal insurgent groups in Iraq. Using suicide bombers as its primary weapon, AQI conducted hundreds of attacks from 2004–2008, and claimed responsibility for over 1,000 civilian deaths.¹⁰⁷

However, the Iraqi people never fully embraced AQI, particularly their call for sectarian warfare. The Sunni tribes of Anbar Province, who originally welcomed the group's insurgent violence, eventually rejected Zarqawi and his followers. AQI's failure to embed socially would lead to the group's defeat at the hands of a US–Sunni alliance in 2007. The loss of Anbar Province as a safe haven would permanently cripple AQI's abilities in Iraq. As of the fall of 2009, AQI is still active, but it is no longer a major threat to Iraq's long-term security and stability.¹⁰⁸

This chapter will argue that AQI's violent ideology and actions did not succeed in promoting social embedding among the Sunni tribes. On the contrary, AQI's strategy accelerated the group's isolation from its Sunni hosts. A combination of strict religious dogma, cultural and economic violations, and coercive enforcement would create enmity between AQI operatives and the region's powerful tribal leaders. The rise of the Anbar Awakening and Salvation Councils in the fall of 2006 would both mark the end of Al Qaeda's reign in the province and its declining influence across Iraq.

¹⁰⁶ Agence France-Presse, "Iraq's most wanted Zarqawi pledges allegiance to Bin Laden," *Open Source Center*, <http://www.opensource.gov> (accessed November 7, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Jane's Information Group, "Al Qaeda in Iraq," *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, <http://search.janes.com> (accessed March 3, 2009).

¹⁰⁸ Jane's Information Group, "Al Qaeda in Iraq."

B. IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Ahmed Fadel al Khalaylah, better known as Abu Musab al Zarqawi, was a relatively uneducated man, with no formal Islamic training. However, his ideology, which combined religious fervor with violent action, profoundly shaped AQI's formation, recruiting, and activities. Zarqawi's ideology rotated around four major tenets: resistance to an apostate regime, destruction of ignorance through offensive jihad, influence over the media environment, and the binding obligation for all Muslims to fight the enemies of Islam.

The first concept was resistance to apostasy (the abandonment or renunciation of a religious belief). Apostasy is common across many religions, but carries particular strength in Islam, where there is a long history of foreign rulers who claimed adherence to the faith, but refused to uphold its tenets. This idea goes back to the 13th Century, when the Mongol Emperor Ghazan reduced Syrian resistance to his forces by claiming that, "Muslims should not fight each other, and that I am a Muslim." During that period, the scholar Ibn Taymiyyah accused Ghazan of apostasy because, while Ghazan had recited the *shahadah*, he refused to enforce Islamic law in his kingdom.¹⁰⁹ For Ibn Taymiyyah, apostates like Ghazan were a deadly threat, and it was necessary for true Muslims to resist these rulers by "all necessary steps." These steps should include war, "even if they contravened the letter of Islamic law."¹¹⁰ War against an apostate ruler is not against Islam; instead, destroying the apostate will ensure that man can live freely under the rule of God.

The second concept espoused by Zarqawi was offensive *jihad* (struggle) against *jahilliyah* (state of ignorance). Jahilliyah is a common Islamic concept that Sayyid Qutb popularized in his book, *Milestones*. Qutb defined jahiliyya as "one man's lordship over another [that] always takes the form of ... a society that which has its own leadership, its

¹⁰⁹ Michael Doran, "The Pragmatic Fanaticism of Al Qaeda: An Anatomy of Extremism in Middle Eastern Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 179, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/798179> (accessed September 3, 2009).

¹¹⁰ Doran, "Pragmatic Fanaticism of Al Qaeda," 179.

own concepts and values, and its own traditions, habits, and feelings.”¹¹¹ Qutb argues that this ignorance directly counters the Qur’an, which states all men must submit to the will and law of Allah and reject the lordship of man.¹¹² Qutb further asserted that the only way to resist jahiliyya is through jihad, or struggle. Specifically, Qutb advocates offensive jihad as a means to “wipe out tyranny and to introduce true freedom to mankind.” Additionally, Qutb saw the defense of Islam as “defend against those elements that limit man’s freedom.”¹¹³

Zarqawi displayed his dedication to jihad with his murder of Nicholas Berg on May 11, 2004. Prior to beheading Mr. Berg, Zarqawi extolled the virtues of jihad to the audience, as well as the righteousness of his actions:

O Scholars, aren’t you full to the point of saturation from attending conferences and rhetorical games? Don’t you think it’s time to get on the path of jihad and carry the sword, with which came the master of the prophets [?] We ask you not to get involved, as you are accustomed to, and not to denounce what we will do, just to satisfy the U.S.¹¹⁴

The third concept promoted by AQI was the importance of influencing the media. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and Osama bin Laden’s second-in-command, learned first-hand about the power of influence. During the Soviet–Afghan War, Zawahiri wrote inspirational pamphlets highlighting the war effort in support of Abdullah Azzam and the Afghan Arabs. These pamphlets inspired both fighters in the field and recruits on the home front.¹¹⁵ In 1993, after Zawahiri returned to Egypt, an EIJ bomb targeting Prime Minister Atef Sidqi killed a 12-year-old girl named

¹¹¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* [Ma’alim fi-l-Tariq], 1964), 40, <http://www.majalla.org> (accessed November 3, 2008).

¹¹² Qutb, *Milestones*, 39.

¹¹³ Qutb, *Milestones*, 55.

¹¹⁴ Sewell Chan and Ariana Eunjung Cha, “American Beheaded on Web Video: Militants Say Killing Was Revenge for U.S. Abuses at Iraqi Prison,” *The Washington Post*, pg. A01, May 12, 2004, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed October 29, 2009).

¹¹⁵ Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, *Ayman Al-Zawahiri: The Ideologue of Modern Islamic Militancy* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: USAF Counterproliferation Center, 2004); 8, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/awc-cps.htm> (accessed October 15, 2009).

Shayma. The Mubarak government used the media to highlight the incident and inflame popular anger against EIJ. The information campaign succeeded in driving Zawahiri and his followers out of Egypt.¹¹⁶

The fourth held by AQI is *fard al-ayn*, or the individual and binding obligation on all Muslims to wage jihad in defense of the faith. Osama bin Laden, as the leader of the global Al Qaeda movement, highlighted this idea in his 1998 with, “The World Islamic Front’s Declaration to wage *Jihad* against the Jews and Crusaders.” This essay laid out the various crimes that the United States has committed against Muslims, ranging from occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places (Saudi Arabia) to the murder of “millions” of Muslims by the “Jewish-Crusader alliance.”¹¹⁷ Bin Laden equated the killing of Americans to a religious duty, stated all Muslims should “kill Americans and seize their money wherever and whenever you find them.”¹¹⁸

Additionally, Bin Laden believed that a true Muslim must commit himself to obeying and enforcing Islamic law. He explained this idea in his 2002 essay entitled, “Moderate Islam is a Prostration to the West.” This work, which was a response to the Saudi intellectuals who wrote, “How Can We Coexist,” stated that *sharia* law “provides a true and just path, securing Muslims, and providing peace to the world.” Bin Laden also argues that Muslims cannot obey *sharia* and live with the West, because “The West of a surety knows this path [of Islamic law] and battles us because of it.”¹¹⁹ Bin Laden also targets those who attempt to negotiate with the West, calling them “backstabbers” who reject *sharia* and the mujahidin who defend it.¹²⁰

All of these ideas shaped Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the founder of Al Qaeda in Iraq. In 1989, Zarqawi traveled to Afghanistan, arriving shortly after the departure of the Soviet army. A year later, he traveled to Peshawar and joined the Arab-Afghan Bureau,

¹¹⁶ Jarret Brachman, Brian Fishman and Joseph Felter, *The Power of Truth: Questions for Ayman Al-Zawahiri* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008): 7, <http://ctc.usma.edu> (accessed May 29, 2009).

¹¹⁷ Raymond Ibrahim, ed., *The Al Qaeda Reader* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 11–12.

¹¹⁸ Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*, 13.

¹¹⁹ Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*, 31.

¹²⁰ Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*, 58.

which was under the control of Osama bin Laden. In Peshawar, Zarqawi would meet and befriend Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi, a distinguished radical Salafi thinker. Al Maqdisi would teach Zarqawi about the tenets of modern Salafism, which included the concepts of apostasy, jihad, and unity under Islamic law.¹²¹

Zarqawi founded *Tawhid wah Jihad* in Iraq with several goals in mind, which he explained in a 2004 letter to Zawahiri. First, Zarqawi wanted to drive out the Americans in order to stop the creation of a “greater Israel.” Zarqawi said, “[the] Zionized American Administration believes that accelerating the creation of the State of [Greater] Israel will accelerate the coming of the Messiah.”¹²² Zarqawi considered the Americans weak and easy to fight because, “[the Americans] do not know the land or the situation of the mujahedeen because [American] intelligence is weak, especially since we know full well that the crusader force will pull out very soon.”¹²³

Zarqawi’s second objective was to create an Islamic state within the borders of Iraq. The Iraqi Sunni complicated this matter because of a lack of spiritual leadership and fortitude. Zarqawi explained,

[The Sunni] are more lost than sheep among the wolves. They have no guide and wander in the desert of gullibility and neglect, divided and fragmented, without a leader capable of bringing them together and preserving the best of them.¹²⁴

This lack of passion, in turn, denied Zarqawi safe havens from which to train and deploy his fighters. He continued,

The only thing preventing us from declaring a general mobilization is that this country has no mountains in which to seek refuge and no forests in which to hide. Our backs are exposed and our movements are known....

¹²¹ Loretta Napoleoni, *Insurgent Iraq: Al Zarqawi and the New Generation* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 50–55.

¹²² Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, eds., *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 252.

¹²³ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 254.

¹²⁴ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 258.

Many Iraqis have shown us hospitality and see us as brothers, but when it comes to making their home a base for launching operations, this is rarer than gold.¹²⁵

The best way to inspire the Sunni was to fight. However, unlike the other insurgent groups, Zarqawi was not content just to fight the Americans. He also wanted to attack the heretics to Islam: the Shia and their Sunni collaborators:

But the other enemy, made of heretics [Shia] and the Sunnis on their payroll, is ultimately the real danger that we face, because these are compatriots: they know our hiding places and are far more cunning than their crusader masters...Evil resides in them: they are the secret cause of our distress; they are the worm in the apple. “They are the enemies; so beware of them.”¹²⁶

Victory in the struggle was a matter of life and death for AQI. In Zarqawi’s mind, this was an existential struggle, and there was a mistake to refrain from extreme violence. Zarqawi indicated this thought at the end of his letter to Al Qaeda’s leadership:

Either we fight them ...or we pack up and go in search of another land. This is why I say again that the only solution for us is to strike the heretics, whether they are men of religion, soldiers, or others, until they submit to the Sunnis. You might object that it is too soon, or unfair to throw the nation into a battle for which it is unprepared; that this will cause losses and spill blood; but that is precisely what we want.¹²⁷

These four concepts were important to Zarqawi for practical reasons. Zarqawi had no secondary or religious education. He was a fighter who “loved jihad, and did not have the patience to learn, teach, or preach.”¹²⁸ However, he understood salafi doctrine well enough that he could quote Ibn Taymiyyah and the Qur’an in his letters and speeches:

Ibn Taymiyyah—after describing the anathema they pronounced against the Muslims—was right to say: “This is why they help the unbelievers against the Muslims. They were the main reason for the arrival of

¹²⁵ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 260–261.

¹²⁶ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 255–256.

¹²⁷ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 264–265.

¹²⁸ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 242–243.

Genghis Khan, the king of the unbelievers, in the lands of Islam, Hulagu's arrival in Iraq, the taking of Aleppo, the pillage of Salihyya, and other things.¹²⁹

The foreign fighters that supported AQI would respect Zarqawi's apparent piety.

More importantly, the foreign fighters understood this observation: a Muslim country was under occupation by a foreign power, which was also supporting the rule of an apostate regime. It was the responsibility of each Muslim to fight the invaders, and the struggle must be seen by the world in order to inspire more of the faithful to join the effort. This practical ideology gave Zarqawi power and influence, and gave him the chance to build a violent movement after the fall of the Saddam regime.

C. 2003: THE INVASION OF IRAQ AND THE RISE OF THE SUNNI INSURGENCY

On 20 March 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom began when the American-led coalition crossed the Kuwaiti border.¹³⁰ The invasion's operational concept was quite simple: use speed and firepower to quickly overwhelm the Iraqi Army and reach Baghdad. The coalition was able to travel quickly up the Tigris River valley against limited conventional resistance. Coalition troops captured the southern oil fields before Saddam loyalists could destroy the facilities and create an environmental catastrophe. By May 2003, US forces had captured Baghdad, and Saddam Hussein was out of power.

Unfortunately, coalition planning did not account for the possibility of an insurgency rising from Saddam's defeat. The Saddam *fedayeen*, an irregular militia of regime loyalists, began to harass coalition supply lines and rear areas shortly after the invasion.¹³¹ The inability to contain and eliminate these small units would later haunt the coalitions' efforts at consolidation and reorganization, while giving the Iraqis the impression that the coalition could not control the militias.

¹²⁹ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 256.

¹³⁰ Michael Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 182.

¹³¹ There is extensive literature on the 2003 invasion of Iraq and its aftermath. Besides the sources listed in this chapter, see also Hashim's *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (2006).

The perception of poor coalition control gained credibility after the Saddam Hussein regime, and any form of governance, disappeared in the weeks following the invasion. Starting on April 16, 2003, Iraqi citizens began a violent looting spree across the country. Nearly every government office, archive, and weapons depot was systematically stripped of every valuable item. Unfortunately, coalition forces, which were still conducting combat operations against the regime diehards, did little to stop the pillaging.

The coalition attempted to solve the crisis by creating the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) on May 6, 2003, under the authority of Ambassador L. Paul Bremer.¹³² Bremer would issue two critical orders that would ignite the insurgency. The CPA's first order called for the "De-Ba'athification of Iraqi Society." The intent was to remove the top four levels of Baath Party leadership from the new government. According to the Baghdad station chief, the order "just disenfranchised more than 30,000 people."¹³³ These Baath party members, particularly at the lower levels, were the government bureaucrats, administrators, and supervisors who had run the country throughout the sanctions period. They were Ba'ath Party members because that was the only way for them to keep their jobs.

The second order dissolved all Iraqi security ministries, all Iraqi military formations, the National Assembly, all National courts, and a host of other agencies that supported the former regime.¹³⁴ While Mr. Bremer's intent was to recreate these entities in a new Iraqi government, the immediate impact was the complete disappearance of any formal security structure except for the Coalition forces. This decision also provided a nucleus of armed and knowledgeable personnel that would help the growing Sunni insurgency to take hold.

From the beginning, the Sunni insurgency within Iraq had several leaders and bases of support. The most apparent group was the former regime loyalists, led by

¹³² Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 475.

¹³³ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 479.

¹³⁴ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, Appendix.

Saddam *fedayeen* and supported by former Ba'ath Party officials. These insurgents wanted to return Saddam Hussein to power. The second insurgent group was the nationalists, which included the Islamic Army of Iraq.¹³⁵ These fighters were unified in their resistance to the coalition presence and a return of Iraqi sovereignty, but did not advocate a return of the Ba'ath regime. The third set was religiously motivated insurgents, which included Zarqawi's *Tawhid wah Jihad* (Unity and Holy War). Their goal was to establish a Sunni Islamic state within Iraq's borders. All three types of groups were unified in their resistance to Iraq's occupation and the creation of a popular democracy.¹³⁶

Zarqawi established an alliance of convenience with the Sunni tribes of Anbar province between Summer 2003 and Spring 2004. The Sunni, who were afraid of a Shia-dominated government in Baghdad, adopted a violent resistance campaign.¹³⁷ Zarqawi and his followers needed an area where he could accept and train both Iraqi and foreign recruits. In addition to open training areas, the Euphrates River valley also provided a natural route to funnel fighters from Ramadi, the provincial capital, to Baghdad and its environs.¹³⁸

In Spring 2004, *Tawhid wah Jihad* began to openly fight U.S. forces in Anbar Province and Baghdad. In April, Sunni insurgents took over the city of Fallujah after a short, fierce fight with US Marines in the area. In May, Zarqawi personally beheaded American captive Nicholas Berg, in "revenge for the humiliation of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib."¹³⁹ The summer months saw a dramatic increase in suicide bombings,

¹³⁵ Ahmed Hashim, *Iraq's Sunni Insurgency* (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009): 89, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=g909085557~db=all>

¹³⁶ While this chapter focuses on Sunni insurgent groups, there were a number of Shia and Kurdish groups in Iraq as well.

¹³⁷ Hashim, *Iraq's Sunni Insurgency*, 40–41.

¹³⁸ Andrew Phillips, "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2009): 72.

¹³⁹ Chan and Cha, "American Beheaded on Web Video."

which targeted both coalition forces and civilians.¹⁴⁰ In particular, the use of suicide car bombers spread fear and destroyed trust across the country.

In each instance of violence, Zarqawi's followers captured the act on video and later broadcast the operations to the world through the media and Internet. This method was very effective for two reasons. First, it gave the Iraqi Sunni both heroes to support and victories to cheer. Additionally, the videos inspired others Muslims in the region to contribute arms, money, and volunteers to continue the fight against the American occupation.¹⁴¹

Throughout 2004, Zarqawi's reputation among the Sunni population grew as coalition casualties steadily increased. Relatively speaking, Tawhid wah Jihad was small in comparison to the other insurgent groups. However, its ability to damage American forces and credibility gave it outsized influence among the people. As a symbol of Zarqawi's strength and importance, Al Qaeda's central command accepted Tawhid wah Jihad's allegiance on 19 October 2004.¹⁴² TWJ became Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, or Al Qaeda in Iraq, the first official AQ affiliate outside of Afghanistan. Zarqawi, now AQI's Emir, had demonstrated to both the Iraqi people and his fellow jihadists that he was willing to employ any means necessary to drive the Americans out of Iraq.

D. 2004–2005: AL QAEDA IN IRAQ AND ITS BASE OF SUPPORT

Shortly after the shift in allegiance to Al Qaeda, AQI suffered two setbacks. In November 2004, coalition forces retook the city of Fallujah, killing and capturing over 1,000 fighters and stripping the insurgency of a crucial training and staging area.¹⁴³ The following January, Iraq successfully held its first national election in the post-Saddam era. While the Sunnis of Anbar Province boycotted the event, the Shia and Kurds participated in heavy numbers, and gained oversized representation in the new Iraqi

¹⁴⁰ Jane's Information Group, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*.

¹⁴¹ Jane's Information Group, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*.

¹⁴² Agence France-Presse, "Iraq's most wanted Zarqawi pledges allegiance to Bin Laden," *Open Source Center*, <http://www.opensource.gov> (accessed November 7, 2009).

¹⁴³ Jane's *Al Qaeda in Iraq*.

Parliament. In the aftermath of these two events, some of the Sunni tribal leaders concluded that the political process “might hold more benefit than continued fighting.”¹⁴⁴

For Zarqawi, compromise between Al Qaeda in Iraq and the Iraq government was never an option. Zarqawi saw the success of Iraqi democracy as the death-knell for his movement. If the Iraqi government were able to establish itself and effectively control the security environment, then AQI would have to either “fight them...their cousins and their sons” or “pack up and go in search of another land.”¹⁴⁵

Al Qaeda in Iraq responded to these setbacks with a surge in violence, primarily aimed at the Shia majority in Iraq. Zarqawi’s strategy was to simply incite a sectarian war between Sunni and Shia. The conflict, which followed Zarqawi’s ideology, would unify the Sunni to resist both the Shia and the coalition presence. The civil war would also prevent the new Iraqi government from establishing itself, and leave the country in a political vacuum. Zarqawi and Al Qaeda could then step into the vacuum, declare themselves guardians of the Iraqi Sunni, and establish a new political entity.

In the process of inciting sectarian hatred, Zarqawi and his forces also worked to embed themselves within the Sunni tribal structure. The first tactic, which AQI copied from its Afghan brethren, was to marry its members into prominent Sunni tribal families. This technique, while effective with Afghanistan’s Pashtu, was quite unpopular among the Sunnis of Anbar. Traditionally, it was forbidden to marry off women to “anyone outside of the larger tribal confederation.”¹⁴⁶ When tribal members resisted these attempts, Al Qaeda operatives responded with violence and intimidation against the families. Thus, the marriage campaign only succeeded in creating enmity between AQI and some of the tribal families.

The antagonism between AQI and the Sunni tribes grew with Zarqawi’s second initiative: to take control of the regional black market trade. The continual flow of foreign fighters to AQI’s ranks required a steady source of revenue for training and arms.

¹⁴⁴ Austin Long, “The Anbar Awakening,” *Survival* 50, no. 2 (April 2008): 77, <http://search.ebscohost.com> (accessed September 3, 2009).

¹⁴⁵ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 264.

¹⁴⁶ Phillips, “How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq,” 72.

The region's traditional source of revenue was the black market –activities such as smuggling, banditry, and extortion. Under Saddam Hussein, the local tribes had exclusive control of this lucrative system.¹⁴⁷ When Zarqawi attempted to muscle in on these markets, the tribal response was quite negative. In fact, one of the Anbar Awakening's first leaders, Abu Risha Sittar, was both a tribal leader and a notorious highway bandit. His motivation to resist AQI came not just from an ideological and moral viewpoint, but also from the economic restraints that Zarqawi tried to impose on his business.¹⁴⁸

The third mistake that AQI made during this transition period was the attempt to impose its belief system on the Anbar population. AQI required both strict adherence to *sharia* law and harsh punishment for disobedience. These punishments varied from breaking the fingers of cigarette smokers to executing women who did not wear the *niqab*.¹⁴⁹ These methods did little to endear the Islamists' cause to either the tribal leaders or the general population.

In spite of the growing tension, AQI successfully used violence and intimidation to limit tribal dissent. In May 2005, the Abu Nimr and Albu Mahal tribes, frustrated with AQI's actions, formed the Hamza Battalion and attempted to work with US Marines during *Operation Matador*. There was little communication or coordination between the two sides, though, and the effort collapsed. A vengeful AQ retaliated against the Hamza Battalion, and defeated the tribal militia by September 2005.¹⁵⁰ The Albu Fahd tribe, located near the provincial capital of Ramadi, attempted to distance themselves from AQI in late 2005. AQI responded by assassinating the tribal leader, Sheikh Nasr al-Fahdawi, in a midnight raid.¹⁵¹ Finally, in January 2006, a suicide bomber killed 70 Sunni police recruits in Ramadi, who had volunteered at the behest of their tribal leaders.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 75.

¹⁴⁸ Phillips, "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq," 73.

¹⁴⁹ Phillips, "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq," 73.

¹⁵⁰ Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 78.

¹⁵¹ Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 79.

¹⁵² Hashim, *Iraq's Sunni Insurgency*, 63.

By February 2006, the situation between AQI and the Sunni tribes in Anbar was precarious. Al Qaeda in Iraq, fighting with foreign volunteers and Iraqi tribal support, was in a heavy fight with coalition forces. AQI was also dealing with growing discontent among the local tribes over cultural, economic, and ideological differences. It had already put down at least two tribal uprisings in Qaim and Ramadi, which had the effect of activating tribal revenge obligations.¹⁵³ The only factor that kept the Sunnis from completely bolting from Al Qaeda was the fear of Shia domination across the country. In spite of the internal violence, AQI's actions against the Shia-backed government continued to unify the tribal elements and Sunni militias.

E. 2006: THE SAMARRA BOMBING AND THE ANBAR AWAKENING

In the early morning hours of 22 February 2006, Haytham Sabah Mahmood Badri led a cell of seven insurgents into the Al Askari Shrine in Samarra, Iraq. The group bound the security guards and planted high explosives throughout the building complex. Shortly after sunrise, the insurgents detonated the explosives, which collapsed the shrine's golden dome and destroyed one of Shia Islam's holiest landmarks.¹⁵⁴

The Al Askari Mosque attack started the sectarian war fight that Zarqawi envisioned in his 2004 letter to Zawahiri. After nearly two years of bombings and attacks, Iraq's Shia population responded with violence. In 2005, the average monthly rate for civilian casualties (both Sunni and Shia) ranged between 100 and 300 killed. After the Samarra bombing, the casualty rate spiked dramatically. In March 2006, the month after the bombing, there were nearly 1,000 civilian casualties across Iraq. By October 2006, the monthly death toll was 3,709.¹⁵⁵

While Zarqawi may have started the sectarian war, Al Qaeda in Iraq was in no position to protect the Sunni population, for the group's reputation was far larger than its

¹⁵³ Phillips, "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq," 77.

¹⁵⁴ Solomon Moore, "THE WORLD; Samarra Mosque Plot Detailed; an Iraqi-Born Insurgent Directed the February Assault on the Key Shiite Shrine that Brought Iraq Close to Civil War, a Top Security Official Says," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed September 3, 2009).

¹⁵⁵ Michael Boyle, "Bargaining, Fear, and Denial," 264.

operational size and capability. According to captured documents, AQI's core of emirs, administrative staff, and advisors was approximately 250 personnel. The remaining rank and file members consisted of foreign fighters, who were primarily suicide bombers, and local fighters, who served with the support of their tribal leaders.¹⁵⁶ AQI's structure was simply not strong enough to fight a protracted campaign against a larger force. AQI's numbers were miniscule in comparison to other insurgent groups, such as the Islamic Army of Iraq (between 3,000–17,000)¹⁵⁷ or the Shia's Mahdi Army (between 5,000–10,000).¹⁵⁸

Additionally, AQI and the tribes had different long-term goals. Zarqawi wanted to replace tribal loyalty with “an ideological commitment to jihadi-salafi ideological goals.”¹⁵⁹ The tribes, however, were unwilling to surrender their independence to any outside organization. AQI wanted to promote a divisive sectarian war. The tribes, on the other hand, saw no rationale in promoting such a conflict. Al Anbar had a small Shia population, primarily located in the Abu Ghraib area east of Fallujah, which did not threaten provincial security. Finally, AQI was a committed advocate of suicide bombings. Sunni tribal leaders, though, were unenthusiastic about seeing “their sons shrouded in explosive vests” in order to achieved AQI's objectives.¹⁶⁰

The Sunni ambivalence became clear after Zarqawi died in a coalition airstrike in June 2006. A notable response came from the Islamic Army of Iraq (IAI), a group that had many tribal fighters and was an apparent compatriot with AQI. Notice how IAI distanced itself from AQI's activities:

¹⁵⁶ Jane's Information Group, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*.

¹⁵⁷ Jane's Information Group, “Islamic Army of Iraq,” *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, <http://search.janes.com> (accessed March 3, 2009).

¹⁵⁸ Jane's Information Group “Mahdi Army of Iran,” *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, <http://search.janes.com> (accessed March 3, 2009).

¹⁵⁹ Brian Fishman, *Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside Al-Qa'ida in Iraq* (West Point, NY: The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2009): 2, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu> (accessed July 30, 2009).

¹⁶⁰ Hashim, *Iraq's Sunni Insurgency*, 23.

This incident is grievous and pleasant at the same time. It is grievous because we lost a dear brother and hero mujahid who engaged in battlefields. I am happy because he will be rewarded for the good deeds he has done we (Islamic Army of Iraq) have no organizational relations [with AQI]; rather it is a relation of brotherhood by religion and unity of ranks.¹⁶¹

After a summer of internal discussion and debate, the Sunni tribes decided to act. On 17 September 2006, several tribes held a conference called “The Day of Awakening.”¹⁶² In this historic meeting, the tribes publicly denounced AQI and their presence in Anbar. In blunt terms, one of the attending sheikhs said,

We all say to the terrorists, leave because you have no place in Al-Anbar Governorate after now. We have discovered from where you get financed and who orders you to kill our Iraqi cousins. Leave now or you will be killed in an ugly way. We are determined to fight you face to face. God is great.¹⁶³

Al Qaeda in Iraq, using the auspices of the Mujahedeen Shura Council, responded rapidly with a new proclamation.¹⁶⁴ On 15 October 2006, AQI established the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), declaring it, “the sole legitimate ruling institution across much of Iraq.”¹⁶⁵ From Ramadi, ISI’s new capital, Emir Abu Umar al-Baghdadi called for all of the various insurgent groups to unite under his leadership and to refrain from “rebellious against its dictates.”¹⁶⁶

AQI’s attempts to rebrand itself were unsuccessful. ISI had declared political control over much of Iraq, but was neither willing nor able to provide the population’s basic needs.¹⁶⁷ Baghdadi’s call for unity only reinforced the impression that AQI was

¹⁶¹ Fishman, *Dysfunction and Decline*, 3.

¹⁶² Al-Iraqiyah Television, “Al Anbar Tribes Hold Conference on Fighting ‘Terrorist Groups,’” September 18, 2006, *Open Source Center*, <http://www.opensource.gov> (accessed November 7, 2009).

¹⁶³ Al-Iraqiyah Television, “Al Anbar Tribes Hold Conference.”

¹⁶⁴ Created in January 2006, the Mujahedeen Shura Council was announced as AQI’s effort to unify the various salafi groups under one organization. In reality, the goal of the MSC was to deflect the effective critique that AQI was under foreign, not Iraqi, control.

¹⁶⁵ Phillips, “How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq,” 74.

¹⁶⁶ Fishman, *Dysfunction and Decline*, 4.

¹⁶⁷ Fishman, *Dysfunction and Decline*, 10.

“pursuing an international and not an Iraqi agenda.”¹⁶⁸ Salafi groups allied with AQI responded negatively as well. Jihad al-Ansari, an insurgent leader, sent an open letter to ISI in March 2007, criticizing the creation of an “Islamic state.”

When the U.S.-led coalition approached the Anbar Sunni tribes and proposed a tactical alliance, the tribes responded favorably. The resulting offensive drove AQI operatives out of Anbar Province. By 2008, AQI had nearly collapsed—it has lost its safe haven, freedom of maneuver, and political influence inside of the province.¹⁶⁹ AQI had failed to embed with Anbar’s Sunni tribes, and was now facing its ultimate defeat.

¹⁶⁸ Hashim, *Iraq’s Sunni Insurgency*, 60.

¹⁶⁹ Hashim, *Iraq’s Sunni Insurgency*, 71.

F. ANALYSIS

In retrospect, how did AQI fit into the social embedding model?

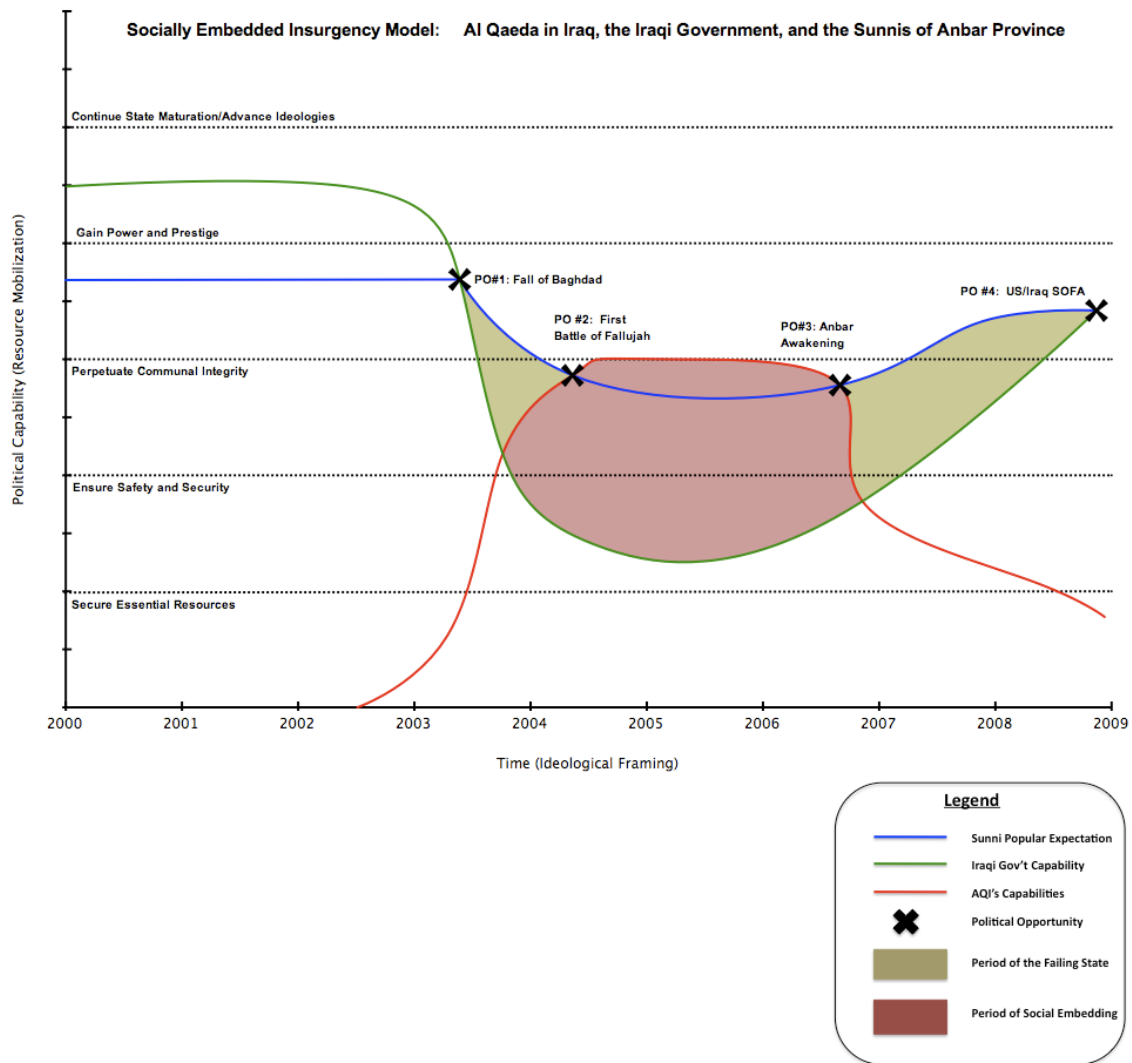


Figure 4. AQI, the Iraqi Government, and the Sunni tribes in the SEI model.

Prior to 2003, the Saddam regime and the Sunni tribes maintained a simple alliance. Saddam gave the tribal leaders relative autonomy as long as they did not rebel against the regime. In return, the tribe could maintain their black market economy without government interference. This alliance was particularly useful during the oil embargo after Operation Desert Storm.

The coalition victory in Baghdad, in combination with the subsequent looting, led to a collapse in state capacity (PO #1 in Figure 3). The CPA's decision to fire all Ba'ath party members and to disband the Iraqi Army gave the insurgency an incredible boost in resources and manpower. These events led to Iraq entering the period of the failing state in the summer of 2003, while the Sunni insurgency began to grow.

As for the Sunni tribes, their expectations also dropped with the removal of the Saddam regime. The actions of the CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council did little to increase any expectations of government support in Anbar Province. In fact, the rise of Shia dominance within the government forced the tribes to focus inward for their own protection and safety. The eventual goal was to return to a level of power and influence with the central government. The tribes supported this goal by providing fighters for the insurgency.

Al Qaeda in Iraq (then known as Tawhid wah Jihad) began to gain power and influence through their resistance to both the US occupation and the nascent Iraqi Governing Council. Through the use of spectacular, high visibility attacks, such as the United Nations compound in Baghdad, TWJ used violence to both increase recruitment efforts and to display clear resistance to the coalition's presence in the country.

Tawhid wah Jihad entered the social embedding stage during the first Battle of Fallujah in April 2004 (PO #2 on Figure 3). The failure of the US coalition to retake the city gave TWJ incredible power and influence. The battle's outcome confirmed to the Sunni tribes that TWJ and the other insurgent groups were protecting the Sunni community from the Shia dominated forces in Baghdad. This impression led to an acceptance of TWJ tactics and presence throughout Anbar Province. This also led to an

increased level of support for the hundreds of foreign fighters that were entering the country through Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.

TWJ, which became AQI in October 2004, attempted to expand its influence among the Sunni tribes in 2005. Zarqawi's group, using Afghanistan as their example, attempted to co-opt the Sunnis by marrying their fighters into some of the larger tribes. Additionally, there were efforts to enforce Sharia law in the province. Common activities, such as smoking, listening to music, and shaving, were outlawed. Finally AQI used violence to murder and intimidate tribal leaders who resisted their efforts. The defeat of the Hamza Battalion in September 2005 was one of several examples of AQI using force to maintain their dominance. Their use of violence, combined with their ideology, was starting to repel the Sunni tribes.

While the tribes were not pleased with AQI's actions, they were more fearful of Shia domination of the political system. This was particularly acute after the first election boycott in January 2005, when the Shia and Kurds were overrepresented in the constitutional assembly.¹⁷⁰ With this clear split of interests, the Sunni were unable to mount a unified campaign against AQI. Thus, the terror group was able to maintain the appearance of communal integrity. This ruse was effective in convincing outsiders that the Sunni were united in its opposition to the occupation.

When AQI operatives destroyed the al Askari shrine on February 22, 2006, the Sunni's long-held fear of a Shia revenge campaign became manifest. In response, the different Sunni communities unified to protect themselves against the Shia, a threat larger and more dangerous than the coalition. The mosque bombing succeeded in elevating Sunni expectation from mere security to communal integrity and survival.

This unification came at a cost to AQI. Zarqawi and his salafi forces had wanted a sectarian conflict from the beginning of the war. Now that one was imminent, AQI was in no position to take advantage. Its numbers were far too small to protect the millions of Sunni in Baghdad and across the country. It had not established any means of

¹⁷⁰ *Al Hayah*, "Talabani mediated between Allawi and Al-Ja'fari to Dispel Fears about the Transfer of Authority," April 22, 2005, *Open Source Center*, <http://www.opensource.gov> (accessed November 15, 2009).

governance to replace the regime in Baghdad. It had no method of providing essential services or resources to the population. AQI has instigated a civil crisis, but was incapable of instituting civil order.

The Samarra bombing led to Anbar Awakening, the third political opportunity in the model (PO3 in Figure 3). AQI's self-inflicted civil crisis with the Shia exacerbated the group's ongoing conflict with the Sunni tribes. Months of violence and repressive action against tribal leaders and customs seriously damaged AQI's reservoir of local support. The creation of the Anbar Awakening Council, with its unambiguous hostility towards foreign fighters, confirmed AQI's rapid descent.

AQI's attempt to re-establish control through the Islamic State of Iraq was flawed on several levels. ISI did not address the gap between the group's capability and popular expectations. AQI's promotion of the Mujahideen Shura Council was an effort to make the state appear as an Iraqi creation. AQI even claimed that it had "dissolved itself and ...declared its allegiance to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as emir of the believers."¹⁷¹ AQI's efforts to become a homegrown movement did not convince the Iraqi Sunni. Instead, it reconfirmed AQI's arrogance and further unified the Sunni tribal alliance.

The Anbar Awakening Movement also gave the Iraqi Government increased legitimacy. When Movement leaders met with Prime Minister Maliki on 27 September 2006, they limited their cooperation to, "the security situation and preserving the safety and security of Iraq and that is all."¹⁷² Maliki and the coalition responded by forming a tactical alliance with the Anbar Movement, with the US committing over \$150 million to the tribes.¹⁷³

The alliance began to pay dividends in 2007. The tribes began to assume security duties within the province. The Albu Mahal tribe took effective control of the region's

¹⁷¹ "'Sada Al-Jihad' Magazine Recounts Islamic State of Iraq's Emergence, June 9, 2008, *Open Source Center*, <http://www.opensource.gov> (accessed November 7, 2009).

¹⁷² Open Source Center Report-Iraq, "Al-Anbar Chieftains Make 'Pledge' to Al-Maliki," *Open Source Center*, <http://www.opensource.gov> (accessed November 7, 2009).

¹⁷³ Phillips, "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq," 75.

Iraqi Army brigade, while the Albu Risha tribe assumed control of the Ramadi Police.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, the Sons of Iraq (SOI) movement—with US assistance—began to actively fight AQI across both Anbar Province. While this alliance was mere tactical, with no long-term agreement in place, both sides shared the desired outcome of forcing AQI out of the region.¹⁷⁵ The result throughout 2007–2008 was the steady decline in AQI’s capability, while the Iraqi government’s ability steadily increased.

The final political opportunity (PO #4 in Figure 4) appeared on 1 January 2009, when the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the United States and Iraq took effect. The treaty defined the terms and conditions under which US forces can operate within the Iraq—from travel and weapons to legal rights and staging areas. More importantly, the SOFA defined the limits of the American presence within Iraq: “All the United States Forces shall withdraw from all Iraqi territory no later than December 31, 2011.”¹⁷⁶ With this declaration, the government’s political capacity and Sunni popular expectations combined into one.

Al Qaeda in Iraq entered the Iraq War with a clear ideology and an effective message: jihad is the best way to drive the coalition out of Iraq. With a radical ideology and a dependence on foreign fighter support, AQI needed local sponsorship in order to survive. The Sunni tribes of Anbar Province welcomed the group’s vigor and determination, but balked at its larger salafist goals. The partnership worked, though, for nearly two years. When AQI attempted to impose its salafist vision on the province, the alliance began to disintegrate because of a lack of popular support. The rise of the Anbar Salvation and Awakening Council, combined with the financial and military support of the Iraqi government and U.S. Coalition, meant the end of AQI’s safe haven in Iraq.

¹⁷⁴ Long, *The Anbar Awakening*, 81.

¹⁷⁵ Fishman, *Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside Al-Qa’ida in Iraq*, 10.

¹⁷⁶ United States Embassy–Baghdad, *Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq* (Baghdad, Iraq: GPO, 2008), 15.

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IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

A socially embedded insurgency provides a difficult challenge for a political regime. Unlike a normal insurgency, the local population has embraced the strategy and methods of the socially embedded insurgent. When this combination occurs, the regime must face a number of unpleasant choices. If the regime wants to break the link between the people and the group, then it may have to initiate an extremely violent conflict. If the regime accepts the insurgent's presence, then it risks giving the group increased legitimacy and attention. Finally, if the regime allows the insurgent into the political process, then it risks its own sovereignty and survival.

This thesis illustrated insurgent conflict as a competition between a regime and its rival to fulfill the needs of the local population. These popular needs, according to a societal view of Maslow's Hierarchy, has five levels. The lowest level is the security of essential resources, such as food, clothing, and shelter. The second level is to guarantee safety and security. The third level is to perpetuate communal integrity. The fourth level is gain power and prestige. The fifth and final need is to continue state maturation and advance ideologies.

This thesis postulated that when the regime cannot meet the needs of the population, it begins to fail as a state. Through words and deeds, an insurgency can surpass the regime's capabilities by providing for the people. When this occurs, the insurgency enters the period of social embedding. Over time, the insurgency can become deeply embedded into the local population. The regime can reverse the embedding if it can increase its own capability or reduces the insurgent's abilities.

From the two case studies in this thesis, it is clear that a socially embedded insurgency is very dangerous to a regime. Hezbollah, through implementation of a practical ideology, successfully embedded with its Shia population during Lebanon's 14-year civil war. It is also clear that social embedding is not a foregone conclusion. Al

Qaeda in Iraq, while starting with high levels of support, failed to embed because it embraced a violent ideology that the Sunni tribes rejected.

This chapter looks at several questions. What are the key factors that determine social embedding? What is the role of violence? How can one accurately identify a political opportunity? What can a decision maker do to fight these insurgencies when they appear? What is the role of a foreign power in fighting an embedded insurgency?

B. KEY FINDINGS

1. Socially Embedded Insurgencies Depend on an “Engine” of Support for Success

As a socially embedded insurgency, Hezbollah conducted a resistance campaign without fearing the loss of popular support. This confidence came from the strength of Hezbollah’s “engine:” The Holy Reconstruction Organ, known as *Jihad al Binaa*.

Hezbollah's Engine of Support: A Systems Thinking Perspective

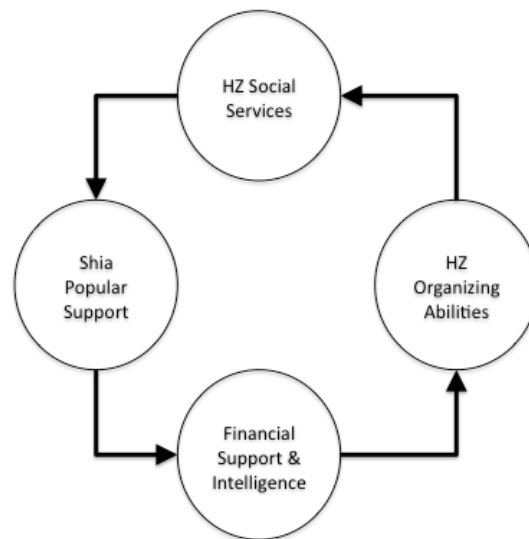


Figure 5. Hezbollah’s support cycle (simplified)

Figure 4 is a simple illustration of Hezbollah's cycle of support. The cycle starts with Hezbollah's ability to provide reconstruction and social services. As Jihad al-Binaa became more effective, popular support for Hezbollah increased. The increase in popular support led to an increase in intelligence and funding. In turn, the increased intelligence and funding led to an increase in Hezbollah's overall capability. This increased capability led to an increase in social and reconstruction services for the people, and the cycle began anew.

The key for Hezbollah was that this engine of support was separate and distinct from its combat divisions, the Islamic Resistance and Islamic Jihad. As such, when the war ended in 1989, the reconstruction arm continued to function and Hezbollah was able to maintain its base of support.

Contrast Hezbollah's engine with Al Qaeda in Iraq's cycle of support.

AQI's Engine of Support: A Systems Thinking Perspective

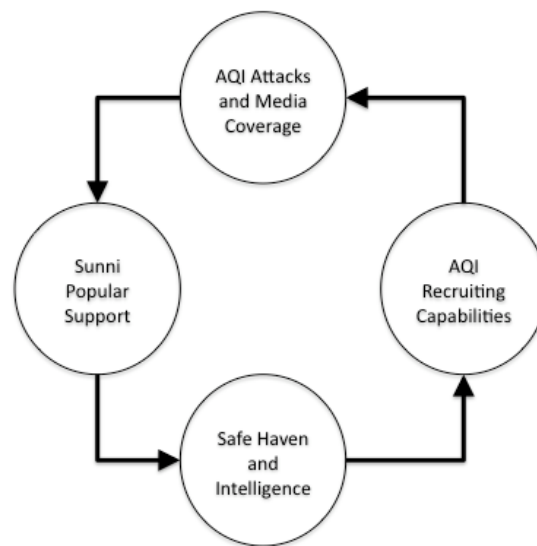


Figure 6. AQI's Support Cycle (simplified)

Figure 5 shows a simplified version of AQI's support engine. As the group engaged in violent and highly advertised acts, it garnered support from Iraq's Sunni population. As the support increased, then the Sunni provided safe havens and

intelligence to protect AQI operatives from the government and coalition forces. The increased safe havens allowed AQI to improve its recruiting capabilities, which brought more fighters into the organization. In turn, the increased fighting capability allowed AQI to conduct more spectacular attacks, and the cycle repeated itself.

Unlike Hezbollah, AQI depended on violence to maintain its support system. As long as the Sunni population supported the increasing levels of violence, then AQI was successful. When Zarqawi and his forces began to use violence on the Sunni, however, the popular support began to decrease, along with the number of safe havens and the flow of foreign fighters.

2. Violence Is Not an Effective Tool to Become Socially Embedded

Violence is a common and effective tool for both insurgents and the regime. Both sides use violence to destroy enemy resources, control the local population, and shape public opinion. An insurgency, though, cannot use violence over the long term to become socially embedded.

AQI serves as an important example of the misuse of violence. For a time, AQI held some level of popular support among the Sunni in Anbar Province. It conducted a destructive bombing campaign against coalition forces that separated them from the local population. It also used its information campaign to recruit a hundreds of foreign fighters from across the region.

When AQI attempted to impose its ideology on the Sunni tribes, though, it encountered resistance. AQI, in turn, began to target and murder tribal leaders, their family members, and other Sunni in an effort to maintain dominance. This started a negative cycle of control that AQI could not maintain. Eventually, the tribes broke away from AQI with the Anbar Awakening, thus ensuring that the insurgent group would never become socially embedded in the province.

In comparison, Hezbollah did not rely on violence to control the Shia. This is not to say that Hezbollah was not a violent organization—on the contrary, it was one of the first Islamic organizations to widely use suicide bombing in combat. However,

Hezbollah did not use violence to control the Shia population. Hezbollah's primary targets were Western forces (until their withdrawal in 1984), Israeli troops, and competing armed factions, such as AMAL and the SLA.

3. The Perception of Occupation Will Give Energy to an Insurgency, Which Can Lead to Social Embedding

In both case studies, the presence of an unwelcome foreign power contributed to the group's rise to power. This contrasts with the perception of the enemy for both cases before invasion.

For Israel, invading southern Lebanon was a matter of national honor. The PLO was continuing to send rockets and fighters from its southern Lebanese safe haven into Israel, which was unacceptable to the government in Tel Aviv. Israel thought that the Shia would appreciate the IDF intervention, for they would drive the foreign Palestinians out of the Litani River valley and bring relative peace to the region.

This, however, was not the impression of the Shia in southern Lebanon. Beirut's acceptance of the IDF invasion only confirmed two Shia suspicions: the central government would not protect them and that Israel wanted to take their land. Eventually, Hezbollah was able to capture this anger and use it as fuel to grow their insurgency.

A similar situation occurred over twenty years later, when the United States invaded Iraq. By all accounts, Saddam Hussein was an evil man who controlled his country through force and intimidation. He repeatedly broke international law and United Nations resolutions. He used chemical weapons against the Kurds and Iranians in the 1980s. In the 1990s, after Operation Desert Storm, Saddam used his army to brutally suppress a rebellion in both northern and southern Iraq, killing thousands of people in the process. Several decision makers thought that removing Saddam from power would lead to the rise of a new Iraq.

Unfortunately, like the Israelis in Lebanon, American ideals did not match Iraqi reality. The loss of order in the country after the fall of Saddam shook local faith in U.S. promises to restore the country. When the CPA dissolved both the Ba'ath Party and the Iraqi Army, it fed Sunni suspicions that America simply wanted to control Iraq's oil

wealth instead of help the Iraqi people. This anger and resentment helped to fuel the nascent insurgency, and AQI was able to use that fuel to grow its insurgency.

4. Political Opportunities Clearly Change the Status Quo for All Parties

Both sides in an insurgency, the insurgent group and the state, want to highlight a specific event to show a change in momentum for themselves and a loss of support for the enemy. These events can range from a spectacular attack on an important base of support to participation in a national election. In most cases, the opposing side can dismiss the action as propaganda or misinformation. Political opportunities, though, are different. When these events take place, they fundamentally change the status quo between the warring factions and the local population, and force all sides to adjust to a new reality.

In Lebanon, the 1989 Taif Accords brought an end to Lebanon's 14-year civil war. The Lebanese government could, for the first time, focus on rebuilding the country and reuniting its war-torn people. Hezbollah, as a major rival, wanted to consolidate its political, military, and social power within the country. The country's Shia population, united after years of war and hostile to the pre-war status quo, were willing to support the side that could fulfill its social and political objectives. Both sides recognized this change to the overall environment, and worked hard to garner Shia support in the 1992 elections.

Contrast the Taif Accords with the November 1989 Tehran conclave. Hezbollah's decision to abandon the pure ideological path and participate in the elections was an important event. However, this event did not change Beirut's approach to reconstruction or the parliamentary campaign, because Beirut knew nothing about it. Lebanon's Shia, which would benefit greatly from the result, also did not change their behavior for the same reason. Thus, while the Taif Accord was a political opportunity, the Tehran conclave was not.

For Al Qaeda in Iraq, there were many momentous events in the group's rise and fall with the population. One event that appeared to be a political opportunity was the Samarra bombing in February 2006. It initiated a violent sectarian conflict between

Sunni and Shia and undermined faith in the Iraqi government. However, the Sunni tribes in Anbar were not directly affected by the bombing. Anbar is a majority Sunni province with a small Shia population. Thus, Anbar did not see the heavy fighting that took place in Baghdad, Nineveh Province, and other mixed sectarian areas.

The situation was different with the Anbar Salvation and Awakening. When the Sunni tribal leaders openly rejected AQI's tactics and presence in the province, AQI had no choice but to give a strong response. Likewise, the Iraqi government in Baghdad responded clearly as well, when Prime Minister Maliki welcomed the Anbar tribal chiefs in Baghdad and pledged support for their campaign. The Anbar Awakening was a clear political opportunity that changed the status quo in Anbar Province

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Finding and Breaking the Insurgency's "Engine" Is Essential

When the insurgency is socially embedded, it receives its energy and drive from a system that is separate from the conflict with the ruling government. In the case of Hezbollah, it received massive Shia support from both its religious ideology and its social service support. In the midst of the civil war, Hezbollah was able to build schools, hospitals, roads, and homes—things that the Lebanese government failed to do in the prewar period. This practical ideology earned Shia loyalty for Hezbollah that was virtually impossible for the central government to seize.

In the AQI study, the group's support system depended on the visible application of violence. The violence served the purpose of garnering foreign fighters and ensuring a safe haven in the Sunni tribal areas. Once AQI became violent with its benefactors, though, the Sunni support system began to defect. This ideology of violence only succeeded in driving AQI's support base into the arms of the Iraqi government and the US coalition.

If a regime wants a realistic chance of defeating a socially embedded insurgency, then it is essential to break the insurgent's engine of support. In Hezbollah's case, the Lebanese government would have to both reduce Hezbollah's social services capability

and provide an equivalent replacement to the Shia population. It would also need to do so in a rapid and efficient manner, for a significant time lag would only anger the local population.

Needless to say, such an endeavor for the government would be incredibly difficult, particularly in the face of Hezbollah's violent resistance and the local population's cool reception to the Christian and Sunni dominated government. The destruction and replacement campaign would require years of effective work in order to pull Shia support away from Hezbollah's remnants. Additionally, there is no guarantee that another group would not rise and take Hezbollah's place. It is far more effective to prevent social embedding in the first place.

2. Strategic Communication and Strategic Patience Is Critical

To prevent an insurgency from becoming socially embedded, it is necessary to control the high ground of strategic communications. The insurgent will use the media to shape public opinion, target regime support, and to demoralize the opposition. The United States, in its efforts to support a regime's counterinsurgency efforts, must provide technical and financial assistance in the realm of strategic communications.

Strategic communications in modern times is both simple to execute and difficult to control. Both Hezbollah and AQI established media outlets to spread their information across the Middle East and the wider world.¹⁷⁷ In Lebanon, the central government was too weak to broadcast a credible alternative. On the other hand, Iraq's information environment had excessive media coverage, making it difficult for the government message to capture and sustain popular attention. The United States must commit resources and technology to counter these two effects.

In addition to strategic communications, the United States must exercise strategic patience in its efforts. During the Cold War, the U.S. fought communist ideology from 1947–1989, an era lasting over four decades. The British campaign against the Irish Republican Army lasted from 1969–2007, a period of thirty-eight years. The modern

¹⁷⁷ Hezbollah's *Al Manar* is one of the most popular television networks in the Middle East, while AQI's *Al Sahab* was a primary source of televised attacks during the group's heyday.

media environment tends to demand fast and easy solutions to complex problem. The United States, and the counterinsurgent regimes that it supports, must resist the quick solution and maintain a long view of the conflict.

When fashioning a strategic communications plan, the United States and its counterinsurgent ally must emphasize long-term behavior, not immediate events. Similar to AQI's methods in Iraq, an insurgent will highlight any tactical success and attempt to portray it as a strategic defeat for the regime. To maintain popular support for the conflict, the U.S. has to acknowledge tactical shortfalls, but must also emphasize strategic successes. Examples of insurgent actions to exploit include: insurgent targeting of innocent civilians, popular rejection of insurgent tactics, and conditions within insurgent safe havens. If the U.S. and the regime can portray these events as typical for insurgent behavior, then communications will be more effective with both the local population and outside observers.

3. Before Beginning an Intervention in a Conflict Zone, Do Your Homework

In both Lebanon and Iraq, foreign intervention inadvertently led to the strengthening of hostile insurgencies. For Israel, its invasion of southern Lebanon led to the growth of Hezbollah. For the United State, its post-Saddam actions led to the rise of AQI. In both cases, it was clear that the foreign intervention was not clearly planned from initial entry to final exit.

Conflict zones are, by their nature, very unpredictable. This does not mean, however, that a foreign power can enter without a plan. An invasion plan must have a clear strategy that balances objectives, methods, and resources. Without a good plan, there is a real risk that unintended consequences will drag the foreign power into a long and costly conflict.

Additionally, the foreign power needs good intelligence analysis on the environment before invading. Both the United States and Israel, prior to their invasions, locked on information that confirmed their suspicions on their planned enemy (Saddam Hussein for the United States and the PLO for Israel). Little work was done to

understand the secondary and tertiary audiences in the battle. For Israel, there appears to have been little appreciation for the situation of Lebanon's Shia. For the United States, there appears to have been little understanding of the role of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq. It is possible that good analysis could have exposed these oversights.

4. Empower the Local Population in Defeating the Insurgency

The insurgency gains its strength from the local population. Likewise, the only force that can destroy an insurgency is the local population. When the insurgency is socially embedded, though, the problem is much more difficult. The regime must not only break the ties of dependence between the local population and the insurgency, it must also replace those ties with an acceptable substitute.

Despite any good intentions, superior resources, or apparent wisdom, a foreign power cannot empower the local population. The insurgency gained its embedding power through the regime's weakness. Only the regime itself can demonstrate the strength and competence necessary to convince the local populace that it is ready to lead again.

As a foreign power, the United States can assist the regime in a number of ways. Militarily, the U.S. can provide training and logistics support to the regime's military forces. It can, in certain circumstances, provide direct military action, such as air cover or ground combat forces. It is important, though, that the regime forces take the lead in combat operations, otherwise, the local community may attach operational success or failure to the American presence, instead of the regime's actions.

Diplomatically, the United States can support its ally through treaty agreements with its neighbors, sanctions or embargos for foreign insurgent supporters, and resolutions against the insurgent group. It can also pressure other nations to withhold recognition of the insurgent cause and refuse to meet with insurgent representatives. As a major power on the international stage, the U.S. can also highlight the plight of the local population, thus blocking the insurgent's own media efforts.

The critical idea in supporting the regime's efforts is to amplify its efforts to a wide audience. The international community must perceive the fight as between a lawful

regime and an unlawful insurgency. Embedded insurgencies succeed when they can drown out the voice of a weakened regime. American support for the regime can prevent that from occurring.

D. CONCLUSION

Insurgent conflict is a reality of modern warfare. As long as resistance groups can successfully use violence to achieve their political objectives, states will have to deal with the insurgent threat. However, the socially embedded insurgency presents a far more difficult crisis for a state, for such entities have legitimacy and power in the eyes of the local population. Removing these insurgents will require a high price in blood and treasure. By recognizing these danger signs when they occur, the counterinsurgent can apply the resources necessary to prevent the insurgency from gaining power. A social embedded insurgency is neither inevitable nor invincible. However, it is like an oak tree: much easier to cut down and handle while small.

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